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Koasati Culture Changes.

Daniel Jacobson

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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KOASATI CULTURE CHANGE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

by

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May, 1954

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ae
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ABSTRACT

KOASATI CULTURE CHANGE

This study is concerned with Koasati culture and Koasati culture change. It endeavors to describe and analyze Koasati culture through two centuries of time - 1750 to the present date - and to point out the changes that have taken place in selected aspects of that culture as a result of Koasati contacts with peoples of alien ways of life.

Examined critically throughout the study are the settlement patterns, the house-types, the social and political organization, the religion, the life cycle, the economy, the clothing, the games, the dances, and the language.

Historical documents, state histories, maps, and professional anthropologists' reports were consulted to produce an account of the early history of the Koasati and their migrations. Koasati tribesmen and white men and women in the neighborhood of Elton, Louisiana, were interviewed in the field to obtain information concerning the history of the tribe and of the present-day community. Chapter 1 chronicles these findings.

Because culture change assumes a point of origin from which subsequent changes can be depicted, a construct is made in chapter 2 of the Creek culture of 1750. This selection was made for two reasons: data on the Koasati prior to that date are meagre, although materials on the Creek Confederacy are readily available; it is

known that the Koasati, as members of the Confederacy were the first to adopt as their own elements of the Creek culture.

Chapter 3 attempts to describe and analyze the Koasati culture between 1800 and 1884. Wherever possible historical works, government agents' reports, and anthropologists' studies were consulted and utilized. The burden of the chapter lies, however, in the memory of the Indians of the present-day community; it was they who served as informants and interpreters for an able investigator - Lyda Averill Taylor - who provide us with much of our knowledge of the migration period. Throughout the chapter comparisons are made with the Creek culture of 1750 and changes in the culture are accounted for.

Chapter 4 attempts to describe and analyze the culture of the present-day community and to account for culture changes since the migration period.

For knowledge of the culture within the community the author relies heavily upon his own field researches undertaken during short-term periods between spring, 1951, and summer, 1953, and secondarily upon the unpublished works of Taylor and Leeds, as well as the published works of Swanton. Special attention is paid to the coming to the community of Reverend Paul Leeds and to the changes in Koasati culture inaugurated by him, and to the coming of the rice farmers to the community which had the effect of altering completely the Koasati economy. Once more comparisons with the culture of the past are made and changes accounted for.

Chapter 5 sums up the critical factors in Koasati culture history and culture change and attempts to answer the question, "Will the Koasati community on Bayou Blue survive?"

CHAPTER I

HISTORY AND MIGRATIONS

The Koasati of the present day are familiar with little of their past history. They possess no knowledge of their origin and have no legends to account for it; they know nothing of their early migrations. The abandonment of Indian Village near Kinder, Louisiana, a comparatively recent occurrence, is known only to the eldest in the tribe, and the exact date of the departure has already been lost. Accurate knowledge of the earlier settlements in Alabama, and the later migrations to Texas and Louisiana, have long since passed from memory. So vague, in fact, is knowledge concerning the past that at least one leader of the present-day tribe insists that his people have never moved, that the Koasati are indigenous to the "piney woods" of Louisiana.¹

History itself has precious little to add to the knowledge of early Koasati settlement and the later migrations. The record is fragmentary and uneven.

During his expedition through the present states of Georgia and Alabama in 1540, De Soto came upon a people occupying a small

¹The view of Douglas John as told to Reverend Paul Leeds, Pastor of the Koasati.

island in the Tennessee River opposite the present Nickajack;²
these were the Coste or Coste of the Spanish chroniclers.

On Thursday the chief of Coste came out to receive them in peace, and he took the Christians to sleep in a village of his; and he was offended because some soldiers provisioned themselves from, or rather, robbed him of, some baracoas of corn against his will. The next day, Thursday, on the road leading toward the principal village of Coste, he stole away and gave the Spaniards the slip and armed his people. Friday, the 2nd of July, the governor arrived at Coste. This village was on an island in the river, which there flows large, swift, and hard to enter. And the Christians crossed the first branch with no small venture, and the governor entered the village careless and unarmed. And when the soldiers, as they used to do, began to climb upon the baracoas, in an instant the Indians began to take up clubs and seize their bows and arrows and to go to the open square.³

Cool heads prevailed, however, and a struggle was avoided. The Coste, modern authorities agree, were the precursors of the present-day Koasati.⁴ Thus the tribe appears in history for the first time.

²See map, fig. 1, p. 219

³Ranjel, in Edward Gaylord Bourne, Editor, Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto. 2 vols. 1904, New York. Vol. II, pp. 109, 110. (Note: Reprints available in "Great American explorers," by David Nutt, 1905; and "American explorers," Allerton Book Co., New York, 1922.)

⁴John R. Swanton, Early history of the Creek Indians and their neighbors. Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 73, 1922. p. 201.

Farther south, near the juncture of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers, another settlement of the Koasati may have existed in De Soto's time,⁵ but this is by no means certain. Archaeological evidence indicates that this so-called Coosada site bears some antiquity; how early the Koasati themselves occupied it, however, is not known. At least one authority believes that the northern Koasati settlement in the Tennessee River was occupied from the base in the south.⁶

Little further is heard of the northern Koasati. A map depicting the distribution of the Indian tribes in the southeast about 1715,⁷ indicates that the Tennessee River site was occupied at that date, and Muskogean-speaking people are known to have lived on the south bank of the river at Larkin's Landing, Jackson County, Alabama, as late as 1784. Thereafter the record is blank and allows for speculation. The Koasati may have been absorbed by the Cherokee, who are known to have lived here at a later date,

⁵The site is indicated on the map, fig. 2, appendix, p. 220

⁶Peter A. Brannon, of the Department of Archives and History, State of Alabama, in a letter to the author.

⁷Distribution of Indian tribes in the southeast about the year 1715. Redrawn from a blueprint of the original among the British Archives. Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 73, 1922. Plate 3.

or they may have joined their Koasati kinsmen in the south.⁸ It is to the southern site that one must turn to trace the origin of the present Koasati community of Louisiana.

During the course of the 18th century the southern Koasati town was intimately connected with other Indian towns in the Coosa-Fallapeosa area, as well as with groups of whites who were beginning to penetrate the domain of the Indians from the east and south. Near neighbors of the Koasati were the Hook-choie-oo-che and Tus-ke-gee who, like the Koasati, were members of the Creek Confederacy.⁹ So, too, were the Alabama, a people with whom the Koasati have been closely linked for at least two centuries, and with whom they maintain cordial relations to this day. While enmities were not unknown, especially with regard to athletic contests waged between the Creek towns, relations among them were for the most part warm and intimate. Relations with other Indian tribes were not always so peaceful.¹⁰

⁸Muriel H. Wright suggests that the Koasati arrived at the Alabama River site in 1684. Why so precise a date is given is difficult to understand. It appears in no other place in the literature as far as the author of the present study is aware. This view was corroborated by Peter A. Brannon, in a letter to the author. See Muriel H. Wright, A guide to the Indian tribes of Oklahoma. Univ. of Okla. Press, Norman, Okla., 1951. p. 179.

⁹Benjamin Hawkins, A sketch of the Creek country, 1798 and 99. Georgia Hist. Soc. Coll., Vol. III. Savannah, 1848. p. 37.

¹⁰James Adair, The history of the American Indians. London, 1775. (reprint ed. by Samuel Cole Williams under auspices of Nat. Soc. Col. Dames Amer. The Watauga Press, Johnson City, Tenn., 1930) p. 286.

Among the whites the Koasati had to deal particularly with the English and French, while the Spanish also had their effects on the Indians' mode of livelihood. The English had by 1680 erected a series of settlements along the Atlantic coast as far south as Charleston, South Carolina.¹¹ It was from these bases in Virginia and Carolina that the English moved into the Creek country. They did not appear as settlers, but as individual traders, distributing their Stroud cloth, selling ammunition, guns, and rum.¹² They set up no permanent trading posts during these early contacts but, disposing of their wares, returned with the deer pelts they had bargained for to Charleston and the Atlantic coast. It is quite probable that English traders visited the Koasati town and neighboring towns prior to 1700, for when the French arrived at Mobile Bay in 1702, under Bienville, brother of the French governor of Louisiana, they discovered that the English traders were already circulating their wares in the Creek towns to the north.¹³

¹¹Alexander Hewatt, An historical account of the rise and progress of the colonies of South Carolina and Georgia. 2 vols. Printed for Alexander Donaldson. London, 1779. Vol. I, pp. 48, 49, 89.

¹²Adair, op. cit., p. 9.

¹³Albert J. Pickett, History of Alabama and incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi from the earliest period. Republished by Robert C. Randolph of Sheffield, Alabama. 1896. p. 191.

At the mouth of Dog River the French erected public buildings, a warehouse, and a fort which they called St. Louis de la Mobile.¹⁴ Until 1711 this settlement was the seat of government for French Louisiana. The site was abandoned in that year in favor of the higher ground on which the present city of Mobile is now located.¹⁵ It was from these sites on Mobile Bay that the Koasati and their Creek neighbors first came into intimate contact with the French.

The earliest meetings were not happy ones. Koasati and Alabama tribesmen, as well as French soldiers, fell in brief skirmishes.¹⁶ But peace was finally secured and permission granted the French to erect a fort in the Creek country. In 1714, on the east bank of the Coosa River, seven miles north of the Koasati town, the "poste des Alibamous", more properly called

¹⁴Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁵Abandonment was necessary due to a rise in the river which inundated both town and fort and destroyed Indian crops upon which the French were dependent. The new site was selected by Bienville. It was an area inhabited by the Choctaw, "L'anse des Choctas". The Indians were conveniently removed to a site on Dog River. See Pierre Margry, Decouvertes et etablissemments des Francais dans l'ouest at dans le sud de l'Amerique Septrionale (1614-1754). Pts. I - VI, Pt. V. pp. 482-484.

¹⁶Pickett, op. cit., p. 172.

Fort Toulouse, was erected.¹⁷ The expedition under Bienville, responsible for the fort's erection, stopped at the Koasati town before passing on to the north. In the French company were two Catholic priests. This in all probability was the first time that the Koasati had come into actual contact with persons professing the Catholic faith.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the reaction to these events is not recorded. Fort Toulouse was to remain in French hands until 1763, when, after the Treaty of Paris signed in that year, the French were forced to abandon all their territory on the North American mainland.

¹⁷The fort was named in honor of Le Comte de Toulouse. It was of log construction with four bastions fifty "toises" square with two iron cannon in each. There were lodgements for soldiers and a "magasin" for munitions and food. See Margry, op. cit., pp. 578-579.

¹⁸The contact may have been made earlier. Mobile had been erected a Catholic parish on July 20, 1703, and was served by the Rev. Henry Roulleaux de la Vente, a priest of the diocese of Bayeux, and by Rev. Alexander Huve. They arrived on July 24, 1704. An Apalache girl was quickly baptized; no record exists of a Koasati baptism. In 1717 the Capuchin Fathers of the province of Champagne agreed to minister to the religious needs of both the French settlers and Indians in the Mobile area. However, no Capuchin Father appeared in Mobile before 1721. See John Gilmary Shea, The Catholic Church in Colonial Days. New York. John G. Shea. 1886. pp. 546-547, 563-565.

Why the Catholic Fathers did not succeed in their efforts to convert the Indians may be due in part to the attitudes and character of the Fathers themselves. For an appraisal of the character of Vente see Charles Gayarre, Louisiana; its colonial history and romance. Harper and Bros. New York, 1851. V.I, pp. 170-173.

The struggle for the continent between the European powers was an epic one,¹⁹ and had considerable bearing on the allegiances and migrations of the southeastern Indians. Adair explains how the French attempted to secure the Creeks as allies against the English:

In each of their towns, the French gave a considerable pension to an eloquent headman, to corrupt the Indians by plausible pretexts, and inflame them against us; who informed them also of every material occurrence, in each of their respective circles. The force of liquors made them so faithful to their trust, that they poisoned the innocence of their own growing families, by tempting them, from their infancy, to receive the worst impressions of the British colonists: and as they very seldom got the better of those prejudices, they alienated the affections of their offspring, and riveted their bitter enmity against us.²⁰

Consequently, when the French were forced to abandon Fort Toulouse several of the Creek peoples, bands of the Koasati among them, inaugurated their series of migrations to the west.

Small bands of Koasati left the mother city on the Alabama River for a site on the Tombigbee River in the Choctaw country.²¹ But their stay there was a short one, for when Romans made his

¹⁹A critical analysis of the contest between the European powers for supremacy in the Alabama-Tombigbee basin can be found in Alfred W. Reynolds, The Alabama-Tombigbee basin in international relations, 1701-1763. Ph. D. thesis. Ms. Univ. of Calif., Berkeley, 1928.

²⁰Adair, op. cit., p. 278.

²¹Ibid., p. 285

journey up the Tombigbee in 1771 the Koasati fields were already deserted.²² The Koasati had returned to the Alabama. It was not long, however, before Koasati bands were moving once more. Twenty families, partly Koasati, partly Alabama, appeared in Louisiana for the first time in 1795.²³ A settlement was made on Red River, sixty miles from its mouth;²⁴ it was not long to endure. Dissatisfied elements abandoned the site in face of a red-ant epidemic and moved to a point near the mouth of the Trinity River in Texas.²⁵ Morse could report 240 Koasati living on the Trinity in 1822.²⁶

Meanwhile, the newly organized United States government had become vitally concerned with the problem of the Creeks on the southern frontier. To deal with the Indians General Washington

²²Bernard Romans, A concise natural history of East and West Florida. Vol. 1. (Vol. 2. unpublished.) New York, 1775. pp. 326-327.

²³John Sibley, in Annals of Congress, 9th Congr., 2nd sess., cols. 1085-1086. 1806-1807.

²⁴George Stiggins, A historical narration of the genealogy, traditions, and downfall of the Ispocoga or Creek tribe of Indians writ by one of the tribe. (Ms. in possession of the Wisconsin Historical Society). Quoted in Swanton, op. cit., p. 204.

It is impossible today to determine the exact site of the settlement. If Stiggins meant by the mouth of Red River, its present mouth, the site is undoubtedly in Rapides Parish, perhaps, in the neighborhood of Pineville.

²⁵Ibid., Quoted in Swanton, op. cit., p. 204.

²⁶Jedidiah Morse, A report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian affairs, comprising a narrative of a tour performed in the summer of 1820. New Haven, Conn. 1822. p. 373. Quoted in Swanton, op. cit., p. 205.

appointed as commissioners George Clymer of Tennessee, Andrew Pickens of South Carolina, and Benjamin Hawkins of North Carolina.²⁷ The latter, in his travels through the Creek country, visited the mother town of the Koasati. He describes it as it appeared to him in 1799:

Cou-sau-dee is a compact little town situated three miles below the confluence of Coosau and Tallapoosa, on the right bank of Alabama; they have fields on both sides of the river; but their chief dependence is a high, rich island, at the mouth of Coosau. They have some fences, good against cattle only, and some families have small patches fenced, near the town, for potatoes.

These Indians are not Creeks,²⁸ although they conform to their ceremonies; the men work with the women and make great plenty of corn; all labor is done by the joint labor of all, called public work, except gathering in the crop. During the season for labor, none are exempted from their share of it, or suffered to go out hunting.

There is a rich flat of land nearly five miles in width, opposite the town, on the left side of the river, on which are numbers of conic mounds of earth. Back of the town it is pine barren, and continues so westward for sixty to one hundred miles.

²⁷W. B. Hodgson, et. al., Creek Indian History. A reprint of "Creek Confederacy," by W. B. Hodgson, and "The Creek Country," by Col. Benjamin Hawkins. Americus Book Co. Americus, Ga., 1938. p. 5.

²⁸Hawkins was probably thinking in terms of linguistics. The Koasati did not speak Muscogee, or Creek proper. Their tongue belongs to the Alabama branch of the Muskogean linguistic stock. For a classification of the Creek tongues see Albert S. Gatschet, A migration legend of the Creek Indians. Vol. I (Brinton's Lib. Aborig. Amer. Lit., No. 4.) Phila., 1884. p. 52.

The Cou-sau-dee generally go to market by water, and some of them are good oarsmen. A part of this town moved lately beyond the Mississippi, and have settled there. The description sent back by them that the country is rich and healthy, and abounds in game, is likely to draw others after them. But as they have all tasted the sweets of civil life, in having a convenient market for their products, it is likely they will soon return to their old settlements, which are in a very desirable country well suited to the raising of cattle, hogs, and horses; ...²⁹

Koasati bands continued to leave the mother town, however, for the west. At the same time Koasati bands were leaving Texas for sites in Louisiana. John Sibley, in a letter to the Secretary of War, October 20, 1809, writes:

The Alibamus and Couchittes are collecting together and setting themselves on the no East side of red River nearly at no. latitude 32.50.³⁰

He reported that the Caddo, in whose territory they were now situated, had no objections to their coming provided they behaved. In 1822 Morse reported that 350 Koasati were still living on Red River.³¹ In 1831 Jehail Brooks reported that the "Couchattie" were among the 2500 Indians included in the Caddo

²⁹Hawkins, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

³⁰Extract from a letter of John Sibley to the Secretary of War, Oct. 20, 1809. (letter in J. Fair Hardin collection, Louisiana Archives. L.S.U., Baton Rouge, La.).

The site today bears the name Couchhatta (Red River Parish), in memory of the Koasati occupation.

³¹Morse, op. cit., p. 373. Quoted in Swanton, op. cit., p. 205.

Indian Agency.³² By 1850, however, the greater proportion of the Koasati tribesmen on Red River had joined their kinsmen on the Trinity, Neches, and Sabine rivers in Texas.³³

While the Koasati were thus spreading westward into Texas, new Louisiana lands were likewise being occupied. Desiring a location which would avail them of good farm land, as well as a stream navigable for canoes, a band of the Koasati chose a site along the banks of the Calcasieu River, near the present city of Kinder. In 1850 few Koasati lived there; the Texas communities were larger. However, this Indian Village site, so called, was soon to become the largest of the Koasati communities. Its population was considerably augmented when, in face of an epidemic, the Texas communities were abandoned.³⁴ While numerous of the Koasati turned to the Alabama of Polk County, Texas, for help at this time, large numbers of the stricken turned to Indian Village, where they were tenderly and willingly received. It has been estimated that

³²Jehail Brooks, in a letter to the Secretary of War, Feb. 25, 1831. (letter in J. Fair Hardin collection, Louisiana Archives. L.S.U. Baton Rouge, La.).

³³William Bollaert, Observations on the Indian tribes in Texas. Journ. Ethnol. Soc. London. Vol. II, 1850, p. 282.

³⁴The Koasati had occupied two villages, Colete and Batista, on the lower Trinity River. The reason for their abandonment is obscure. An epidemic is postulated on the basis of a statement in Swanton, op. cit., p. 206.

approximately 250 Koasati lived there prior to the Civil War.³⁵

Nearly two decades later the Koasati were forced to move once more. They were compelled to leave Indian Village in face of strong pressure from the whites, who obtained homesteads from the federal government in the area under the terms of the Homestead Act of 1862.³⁶ Elders of the present-day tribe conjure up stories of an epidemic to explain the migration;³⁷ these are probably without foundation.

Having been uprooted from the land the Koasati faced the problem of locating a new site. James Cole, a white man and friend of the Indians, persuaded the Koasati that they too might become homesteaders and landowners.³⁸ Land, Cole said, was to be found fifteen miles to the east on either side of Bayou Blue.³⁹ With Cole acting as agent, several of the Koasati obtained homesteads in the area and inaugurated the short migration to the east. The year was

³⁵The statement of Reverend Paul Leeds, who bases his figures on talks with the tribesmen when he first arrived in the Koasati community in 1893.

³⁶The statement of Kinney Williams, a present-day tribesman, in a conversation with the author.

³⁷Mrs. Ency Abbott, through interpreters Bel Abbey and Sam Thompson, to the author. Mrs. Abbott tells the story of a yellow-fever epidemic which she believes forced the migration.

³⁸Informant: Kinney Williams

³⁹The vicinal location of the present Koasati community is indicated on the map, fig. 3, p. 221

1884.⁴⁰ The numbers in the area increased rapidly after the initial migration. When Reverend Leeds, their present preacher, discovered them in 1893, the Koasati in the present community numbered between 150 and 200.⁴¹

All the tribesmen did not leave Indian Village during this period, however. Alec Robinson, for example, secured a homestead on the Calcasieu, and lived with his family on excellent terms with his white neighbors for many years.⁴² Remains of an old well and fireplace can still be seen on the old Robinson place but a new vegetation is fast covering the remains.⁴³

The Koasati on Bayou Blue also retained close ties with Indian Village. They were invited to the banks of the Calcasieu each summer by the whites for purposes of trade. From the cane along the river's banks the Indians created temporary dwellings and manufactured twilled-plaited baskets. The latter they sold to the whites in return for flour and sugar. Relations between Indian

⁴⁰The statement is from a short mimeographed article (unpublished), originally intended for a Congregational Home Missionary periodical, by the Reverend Paul Leeds, a copy of which is in the author's possession.

⁴¹The estimate is by Reverend Paul Leeds in a conversation with the author.

⁴²Informant: Alphonse Bushnell, a white man, of Kinder, La.

⁴³Mr. Adrian Buller, a neighbor of Robinson, was kind enough to go over the ground with the author.

and white man were cordial.⁴⁴

Nine years after their arrival on Bayou Blue, Reverend Leeds observed them for the first time.

Idleness, drunkenness, aimlessness and poverty marked their daily life, indicating no shadow of the knowledge of God, or His saving grace.

Small bark-roofed huts were their homes; game corn and wild fruits in season their main diet, and drinking liquor, wild dancing and a crude form of racket ball formed their usual pastime. There is no evidence that they were a treacherous or warlike people, or ever participated in a massacre of the whites. Their women were usually chaste and faithful to their husbands and they were generally a peaceful and harmless folk.⁴⁵

The existing evils among the Koasati, however, as he understood them, Mr. Leeds set as one of his missions in life to correct. He would convert the Indians to Christianity. In March, 1901, the first services were held in the Koasati school house; in September of the same year the Indians erected the St. Peter's Congregational Church in the area on their own volition. The date is an important one. It marks for the Koasati a major turning point in their history. They were induced, thereafter, to abandon their tribal dances and games such as the ball play; they were encouraged

⁴⁴Informants: Mr. Alphonse Bushnell and Mr. A. Nevil, both of Kinder.

⁴⁵Paul Leeds, A long trail to Christ, or how the Koasati Indians were first evangelized. Unpublished. 1938. p. 2.

not to consume alcoholic beverages; they were taught that the worship of the Koasati gods and spirits was sinful. The Indians resisted these changes but as the years passed they became further acculturated to the ways of the white man.

Economic and cultural factors accentuated the spiritual ones in the acculturation process. In 1882 the Southern Pacific Railroad had been extended across the Louisiana prairie.⁴⁶ With the rails came an influx of farmers from the Middle West.⁴⁷ Their hope was to grow rice on the Louisiana prairie using the methods of the wheat farmer best known to them.⁴⁸ The venture was crowned with almost immediate success. The land was quickly populated. Acadian French and eastern Louisiana prairie Negroes joined the Midwestern farmers in southwestern Louisiana.⁴⁹

The effect upon the Koasati of the influx of rice farmers was profound and enduring. In 1910 Odell Bertrand, a French farmer, purchased land within the Koasati community. White man and Negro were now near neighbors of the Indian, and it was not unusual to

⁴⁶Lauren C. Post, "The Rice Country of Southwestern Louisiana," Geographical Review, Vol. XXX, 1940. p. 580.

⁴⁷The possibilities of growing rice were enthusiastically advertised. Farmers from Iowa, Nebraska, and Illinois moved to southwestern Louisiana. For an illustration of such an advertisement see the editorial of the New Orleans Times-Democrat, quoted in the Rayne Signal, Rayne, La., June 12, 1886.

⁴⁸Post, op. cit., pp. 585-587.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 582.

find them all working together for a single employer.⁵⁰ As a result, the Koasati were pressed to learn English, and on rare occasions to understand French, in addition to utilizing their native tongue. More and more the Indian economy was to be attuned to the economy of the white man; more and more the Indian was to become a wage laborer rather than a subsistence farmer and hunter; more and more the Indian leadership realized that to live in a white-man's world you must learn the white-man's ways.

In 1915, Mr. L. L. Simmons, a white man, came to teach public school for these people. He was a faithful and intelligent Christian and for over twenty years he remained with them, not only teaching school, but working with them in all matters pertaining to their advancement in right ways.⁵¹

The Koasati children learned to speak and write English; they learned to sing church songs. Young adults submitted to the same teachings. However, there are still many Koasati who cannot speak English or who do so only with difficulty.

⁵⁰The statement of Kinney Williams, who illustrated his point by stating that Jackson Langley and other Koasati tribesmen worked with both whites and Negroes for Mr. G. M. Houston.

⁵¹Leeds, op. cit., p. 3.

Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Ensign had preceded Mr. Simmons to the community and had worked with the Koasati over a two-year period. Kenneth McCoy and Effie Wishman held similar posts following Mr. Simmons.

In the winter of 1917-1918 the widespread influenza epidemic struck the Koasati community. Approximately 40 persons, one-sixth of the population, succumbed to the disease.⁵² Since many of the victims were young people, the effect of the disaster was sharply to curtail the future Koasati birthrate. In 1917 the Koasati population stood at approximately 250.⁵³ Today the population numbers 167.⁵⁴

The influenza epidemic is not solely responsible for the decrease in Koasati numbers. Tribesmen of the present day are known to abandon the community for homes in Oklahoma and for the Alabama-Koasati Indian Reservation near Livingston, Texas.⁵⁵ The attractions are more-plentiful employment, higher wages, and better living conditions.⁵⁶

⁵²The statement is Reverend Paul Leeds', in a conversation with the author.

⁵³Reverend Paul Leeds, in a conversation with the author.

⁵⁴The number recorded in the Union Roll Book at the Koasati church, in the summer of 1952. It should be noted, however, that all of the Koasati are not church members. On the other hand, names of persons appeared on the list who had already abandoned the community. The present number is approximately 200.

Names of the present day tribesmen are recorded in the appendix, pp. 229-231.

⁵⁵Luke Robinson left in 1951 for Oklahoma; Sam Thompson and wife and Martin Abbey left for Texas in 1952.

⁵⁶The statement of Sam Thompson in a conversation with the author.

The community recalls in its more recent past the flood of 1927, the construction of the new church in 1934, the great world war of 1939-1945 in which 22 tribesmen were engaged, one of whom was killed, the burial of their beloved chief, Jeff Abbey, on February 15, 1951, the participation by the Koasati in the International Rice Festival at Crowley, Louisiana, in October, 1950 and 1951, and the flood of May, 1953, when the northwestern and southern portions of the community were inundated with 22 inches of rain in a two-day period, forcing the community's evacuation.⁵⁷

⁵⁷Louisiana REA News, June, 1953.

Louisiana National Guard units and Red Cross volunteers, using motor boats, assisted in the evacuation. Women and children were evacuated to the chapter house, but when flood waters rose about it, they were taken to Elton where they were quartered in the American Legion building. The men remained in their homes as long as possible but they, too, were finally evacuated to Elton and quartered in the Negro dance hall there. No homes were destroyed as a result of the flood; no lives were lost.

CHAPTER II

THE CREEKS AND THE CREEK CULTURE OF 1750

The land between the Tombigbee River on the west and the Ocmulgee River on the east was in 1750 the area claimed by the Indian peoples known to the English traders as the Creeks.¹ The name Creeks, it is conceded, was derived from the fact that the country abounded in small bays, creeks, and swamps.² In earlier times the Creek lands had extended to the Atlantic Ocean, but English settlement was already in 1750 pressing the Creeks westward. In the west the Creeks occupied effectively only the terr-

¹Caleb Swan in Henry R. Schoolcraft, Historical and statistical information respecting the history, condition and prospects of the Indian tribes of the United States. Parts I-VI. Phila., 1851-1857. Vol. V. pp. 253-257.

The eastern boundary of the Creeks fluctuated considerably. Hodge says, "They claimed the territory on the E. from the Savannah to St. Johns r. and all the islands, thence to Apalache bay, and from this line northward to the mountains. The s. portion of this territory was held by dispossession of the earlier Florida tribes. They sold to Great Britain at an early date their territory between Savannah and Ogeechee rs., all the coast to St. John's r., and all the islands up to tidewater, ... See Frederick W. Hodge, Handbook of American Indians north of Mexico, Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 30. 2 vols. 1905. Vol. I. pp. 362-363.

²James Adair, The history of the American Indians. London. 1775. (Reprint ed. by Samuel Cole Williams under auspices of Nat. Soc. Col. Dames Amer., The Watauga Press, Johnson City, Tenn., 1930.) p. 274.

itory to the Alabama River; the Tombigbee was claimed as part of the hunting ground, but was in effect Choctaw territory.³

The Creeks were not an Indian tribe, but a loose confederation of numerous tribes, numbering approximately 11,000 persons in all.⁴ They were town dwellers, living as late as 1777 in fifty separate towns on the Chattahoochee and Flint rivers, as well as on the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers.⁵ The English traders referred to the former as the Lower Creeks, to the latter as the Upper Creeks. One Upper Creek town was the town of the Koasati, situated in the broad lowland valley of the Alabama River, three miles south of the Coosa-Tallapoosa confluence.⁶

³Swan, op. cit., p. 257.

⁴William Bartram, The travels of William Bartram. (Ed. by Mark Van Doren, Facsimile Library, New York, 1940.) p. 367. The volume will hereafter be referred to as Travels.

Swan, op. cit., p. 263, places the number fourteen years later at 25,000 or 26,000. The figure is an exaggerated one. It is based on General McGillivray's statement that 5000 or 6000 warriors were available to the Creeks. McGillivray, trying to impress Swan, might well have exaggerated the figures.

⁵Ibid., pp. 366-367.

Gatschet makes a clear distinction between Creek towns and villages. A town is a settlement with a public square; villages had no public square. See Albert S. Gatschet, A migration legend of the Creek Indians. (Brinton's Lib. Aborig. Amer. Lit., No. 4.) Vol. I Phila., 1884. p. 121.

⁶See Hawkins' description of the Koasati town, pp. 10-11, this ms.

The Creek Towns

The Creek towns, the Koasati town among them, all contained a public square, located at the town's center.⁷ Four one-story rectangular buildings of wooden frame were set up in a square facing the cardinal points of the compass. Only the front of the buildings, facing inwardly toward the square, were open. Each was divided into three parts.

The building facing the east was given over to the men of highest rank; the buildings on the south side were occupied by the warriors; those on the north side by persons whom the traders called the "second men;" the west-facing cabin contained either the necessary apparatus for making town repairs, or was the cabin of the young people.

The town square was the public meeting place of the Creeks. Here the leaders of the town met each day to discuss preparations for war, to arrange details for the religious ceremonies, or to converse among themselves.⁸

⁷For excellent descriptions of the town square see Swan, Bartram, or Hawkins. The description below is based largely upon Swan.

⁸Adair, op. cit., p. 453. Also Swan, op. cit., p. 265.

Complements to the public square were the chunky yard and hot house.⁹ The former was located at the southwest corner of the square, the latter at the northwest corner. Here the Creeks participated in their tribal dancing and in games such as the ball play. The chunky yard was the summer playground; the hot house was used in winter.

In the center of the chunky yard stood an obelisk of pine thirty or forty feet high at the top of which a pennant was suspended. It was the object at which the braves aimed in the bow-and-arrow contest. Shorter "slave posts" were also found in the chunky yard. Captives of the Creeks were bound here before being burned or otherwise tortured. By 1750 the chunky yard had already lost much of its significance. It was swept clean each day but the former rites were rarely practiced.¹⁰

The hot house is described by Caleb Swan:

The house is a perfect pyramid of about twenty-five feet high, on a circular base of the same diameter. The walls of it are of clay, about six feet high, and from thence drawn regularly to a point at the top, and

⁹Swan, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

¹⁰William Bertram, Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians, 1789. With prefatory and supplementary notes by E. G. Squier. Trans. Amer. Ethn. Soc., Vol. III, Pt. 1, New York, 1853. Reprinted 1909, pp. 34-36. The volume will hereafter be referred to as Observations.

covered round with tufts of bark. Inside of the hot house is one broad circular seat made of canes, and attached to the walls all around. The fire is kindled in the center; and the house having no ventilator, soon becomes intolerably hot; yet the savages amidst all the smoke and dust raised from the earthen floor by their violent method of dancing, bear it for hours together without the least apparent inconvenience.¹¹

The houses in which the Indians lived were also laid out in a specific pattern.

... their houses are neat commodious dwellings, a wooden frame with plastered walls, and roofed with Cypress bark or shingles; every habitation consists of four oblong square houses, of one story, of the same form and dimensions, and so situated as to form an exact square, encompassing an area or court yard of about a quarter of an acre of ground, leaving an entrance into it at each corner.¹²

This pattern was conformed to by the more prosperous of the Creek tribesmen. Many of the homes, however, were individual dwellings, often no more than a log cabin.¹³ Adair points out that the Indians constructed both a winter and summer home.

¹¹Swan, op. cit., pp. 265-266.

¹²Bartram, Travels, op. cit., p. 318. The description is of Coolome, an Upper Creek town on the Tallapoosa River.

¹³For a picture of such a log cabin see Swan, op. cit., opposite p. 394.

For their summer houses, they generally fix strong posts of pitch-pine deep in the ground, which will last for several ages-The trees of dried locust, and sassafras, are likewise very durable. The posts are of an equal height; and the wallplates are placed on top of these, in notches. Then they sink a large post in the center of each gable end, and another in the middle of the house where the partition is to be, in order to support the roof-tree; to these they tie the rafters with broad splinters of white oak, or hiccory, unless they make choice of such long saplings, as will reach from side to side over the ridge pole, which, with a proper notch in the middle of each of them, and bound as the other sort, lie very secure. Above those, they fix either split saplings, or three large winter canes together, at proper distances, well tied. Again, they place above the wallplates of both sides the house, a sufficient number of small crooks to bear up the eave-boards: and they fasten each of them, both to one of the rafters and the wallplate, with the bandages before described. As the poplar tree is very soft, they make their eave-boards of it, with their small hatchets: having placed one on each side, upon the crooks, exceeding the length of the house, and jutting a foot beyond the wall, they cover the fabric with pine, or cypress clap-boards, which they can split readily; and crown the work with the bark of the same trees, all of a proper length and breadth, which they had before provided. In order to secure the covering from the force of the high winds, they put a sufficient number of long split sapplings above the covering of each side, from end to end, and tie them fast to the end of the laths. Then they place heavy logs above, resting on the eave-boards, opposite to each crook, which overlap each other on the opposite sides, about two feet a-top, whereon they fix a convenient log, and tie them together, as well as the laths to the former, which bind it together, and thus the fabric becomes a savage philosopher's castle, the sides and gables of which are bullet proof.¹⁴

¹⁴Adair, op. cit., pp. 449-450.

To raise their winter homes

... they fix deep in the ground, a sufficient number of strong forked posts, at a proportional distance, in a circular form, all of an equal height, about five or six feet above the surface of the ground: above these, they tie very securely large pieces of the heart of white oak, which are of a tough flexible nature, interweaving this orbit, from top to bottom, with pieces of the same, or the like timber. Then, in the middle of the fabric they fix very deep in the ground, four large pine posts, in a quadrangular form, notched a-top, on which they lay a number of heavy logs, let into each other, and rounding gradually to the top. Above this huge pile, to the very top, they lay a number of long dry poles, all properly notched, to keep strong hold of the under posts and wall-plate. Then they weave them thick with their split sapplings, and daub them all over about six or seven inches thick with tough clay, well mixt with withered grass: when this cement is half dried, they thatch the house with the longest sort of dry grass that their land produces. They first lay on one round tier, placing a split sappling a-top, well tied to different parts of the under pieces of timber, about fifteen inches below the eave: and, in this manner, they proceed circularly to the very spire, where commonly a pole is fixed, that displays on the top the figure of a large carved eagle. At a small distance below which, four heavy logs are strongly tied together across, in a quadrangular form, in order to secure the roof from the power of envious blasts. The door of this winter palace, is commonly about four feet high, and so narrow as not to admit two to enter it abreast, with a winding passage for the space of six or seven feet, to secure themselves both from the power of the bleak winds, and of an invading enemy. As they usually build on rising ground, the floor is often a yard lower than the earth, which serves them as a breast work against an enemy: and a small peeping window is level with the surface of the outside ground, to enable them to rake any lurking figures in the case of an attack.¹⁵

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 450-451.

Building the house was a community effort - all able hands assisting the builder. And it was not uncommon for tribesmen of the neighboring towns to assist as well.¹⁶ Thus, a strong ~~con-~~odious dwelling was often completed in a single day.¹⁷

Whitewashing and decorating added to the house's appearance.

The paintings which I observed among the Creeks were commonly on the clay-plastered walls of their houses, particularly, on the walls of the houses comprising the Public Square... The walls are plastered very smooth with red clay, then the figures or symbols are drawn with white clay, paste, or chalk; and if the walls are plastered with clay of a whitish or stone color, then the figures are drawn with red, brown, or bluish chalk or paste.¹⁸

Interiors were not lavishly arrayed. The bed consisted of a cane splint mattress mounted on a wooden frame over four posts. The bedding was of bear or deerskin dressed with the hair on. This was particularly true of the male youngsters; females were covered with a fawn skin or that of a young buffalo calf. The Creeks believed that the attributes of the animal would be possessed by the sleeper.¹⁹

¹⁶Ibid., p. 442.

¹⁷Idem.

¹⁸Bartram, Observations, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁹Adair, op. cit., p. 452.

Stools of poplar wood and earthen jars, pots, and pans were known in the Creek home of 1750, as were wooden dishes, and spoons of wood and buffalo horn.²⁰ The floor was invariably covered with a handsome hemp carpet elaborately decorated.²¹

Social Organization

The everyday life of the Creeks was in large measure controlled by a social organization featuring the family, the clan, the phratry, and the clan and town moieties.²² Unfortunately, the information available is scanty, although general characteristics can be ascertained.

Knowledge of the family could be derived from the terms of kinship employed, but the early travellers in the Creek country were virtually silent on this point. Stiggins, however, says:

All the men of the father's clan or family are called their father, the women are generally called their grandmother, all the men of the mother's family older than themselves are their uncles, being their mother's brothers. All of their own age and under are called their brothers, and all of the old women of their mother's clan are called grandmother or aunt.²³

²⁰Ibid., p. 452.

²¹Ibid., p. 453.

²²John R. Swanton, Forty-Second Annual Report, Bur. Amer. Ethnol., 1924-1925. p. 79.

²³George Stiggins, A historical narration of the genealogy, traditions, and downfall of the Ispocoga or Creek tribe of Indians writ by one of the tribe. (Ms. in possession of the Wisconsin Historical Society.) p. 28.

The Creeks, therefore, used a classificatory relationship system, although the actual terms used in 1750 were not recorded. The immediate family consisted apparently of the mother and father, perhaps the children of the daughter of the house and her husband. Never did a young man bring his wife to the home of his mother to live. Occasionally, one or two of the aged, whose wives had passed away, also joined the family. This was not a common practice, however.

Of greater significance to the Creeks was the matrilineal clan system. Every Creek child belonged to the clan of which his or her mother was a member.²⁴ Exogamy was the rule. A Koasati girl of the Bear clan was forbidden to marry a Koasati boy in the same clan. In addition to regulating marriage, the clan system served other functions. It was the chief organization to which the Creek tribesmen owed his allegiance; it in turn provided him with security against incursions from the outside. The clan was also responsible for several of the behavior patterns peculiar to the tribesmen. A "joking relationship," for example, existed between clan members; one was permitted to say insulting things about one's own clan which non-clan members were not permitted to say.²⁵

²⁴Stiggins, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁵This is an assumption based upon a later Creek practice. See Swanton, op. cit., p. 168.

The clan in former days had in all probability served as a law-making body, as a dispenser of justice, as a regulator of property holdings, and as an important agent in the war and religious ceremonies of the tribes. By 1750 the power of the clan was already diminishing. The rules of exogamy were being violated and marriages between white men and Creek women were being consummated.²⁶ Whether or not the Koasati fields on the island in the Coosa River were the responsibility of the individual family or the clan at this time, will perhaps never be known.

Each clan was totemic and much respect was paid the individual totem.²⁷ While over fifty clans were known to the Creeks as a whole, the Koasati probably had fewer than that number. At least

²⁶The French and English both intermarried with Creek women. An outstanding example of such a union was the marriage of a Creek maiden to Captain Marchand, commander of the French post at Fort Toulouse (see pp. 6-7). The daughter of the couple was Sehoy Marchand, who married Lachlan McGillivray in 1746. It was this union that produced the famous Creek chieftain, Alexander McGillivray. For an excellent account of the early years and courtship of Lachlan McGillivray see Albert J. Pickett, History of Alabama and incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi from the earliest period, Republished by Robert C. Randolph of Sheffield, Ala. 1896. pp. 342-344.

²⁷Frank G. Speck, The Creek Indians of Taskigi town, Mem. Amer. Anthr. Asso., vol. II, pt. 2, Lancaster, Pa., 1907. p. 115.

ten were quite common, however: the Wildcat, Beaver, Turkey, Panther, Wind, Bear, Salt, Deer, Wolf, and Alligator clans.²⁸ Among the Creeks the Wind clan was held in high esteem; the women who were members were often referred to as "grandmothers," an appellation of respect.²⁹

The clans did not exist wholly as closed organizations. Often one clan was linked with another, or others, to form a phratry. While the individual clan identity was retained, all participating members of the linked clans felt that a bond of friendship existed among them. While the phratry was theoretically exogamous, the rule was not necessarily followed. The Bear and Wolf clans were commonly linked together as were the Wildcat and Panther clans.³⁰ Other groupings were also common. Among the Koasati, clans featuring clawed animals were often linked together.³¹ Exactly how the Koasati clans were linked in 1750 is not known.

²⁸This claim cannot be made for certain. It is postulated in the belief that those clans known or remembered by persons of the present-day community were in existence in 1750.

²⁹Stiggins, op. cit., p. 28. Quoted in Swanton, op. cit., p. 145.

³⁰Swanton, op. cit., p. 145.

³¹Ibid., pp. 128-144.

A dual division also existed among the clans. One such division was called Hathagalgi, "white people," the other Tellokogalgi, or "people of different speech."³² The clans which made up the dual divisions were different in each Creek town. The Wind and Bear clans among the Koasati were probably Hathagalgi; the Bird, Beaver, Alligator, Deer, Panther, and Raccoon clans, Tellokogalgi.³³ In very early times exogamy may have been the rule among the divisions, although this is by no means certain. By 1750 the dual clan divisions were recognized as such, but probably served no important function.

A more significant dual division existed among the individual towns of the confederacy. They were divided into two "fires," the White towns - the towns of peace, the Red towns - the towns of war.³⁴ In 1750 the Koasati town was a White town.³⁵ To the White towns in

³²Ibid., p. 157.

³³Ibid., p. 158.

³⁴Swan, op. cit., p. 279.

Gatschet states, "The term fire evidently refers to council fires, which had to be kindled ceremonially by the friction of two pieces of wood. The term fire was also applied by Shawanos and other Northern Indians to the states formed by the early colonists, and is still used of the States now constituting the American union: the thirteen fires, the seventeen fires, etc." See Gatschet, op. cit., p. 153

³⁵Swanton, op. cit., p. 264.

The statement may or may not be true. The Koasati were often on the warpath. Pickett refers to them as the "bloody Coosawdas". He describes how they "hung their trophies upon the council-house, and danced around them with exulting shouts." See Pickett, op. cit., p. 425.

earlier days was left the function of proposing peace between the towns or tribes then at war. The White towns were also places of refuge; a warrior escaping during a conflict to a White town could not be harmed there.³⁶ The Red towns prosecuted the wars. Little affection existed between the towns of opposite fires. It is conceivable that during the ball play in the summer a White town's opponent was a Red town. The status of the town was not absolutely fixed, however. If defeated four times in succession in the ball play, a town could be forced to change its designation.³⁷ Changes of this sort, while not common, did occur.

Political Organisation

Each year in May the chiefs of the entire confederacy met in one of the larger Creek towns to discuss the problems of mutual concern.³⁸ A favorite meeting place was Tuckabatchee, the largest

³⁶Swan, op. cit., p. 279.

³⁷This may have been true only of the Creeks of a later date. See Mary R. Haas, Creek Inter-town relations, Amer. Anth., Vol. 42, 1940, p. 480.

³⁸Pickett, op. cit., p. 93.

Swan states, "The time and place is fixed by a chief, and the space between the time of warning and that of assembling is called the broken days. They assemble in the public square of some central town, drink black-drink, exchange tobacco, and the chiefs and orators afterwards proceed to give or receive advice with profound gravity and moderation." Swan, op. cit., p. 279.

of the Upper Creek towns.³⁹ At the same time each town had its own seat of government.

At the head of the town stood the chief, known to the Creeks as the micco.⁴⁰ The chief of the Khasati town was referred to as the Khasati micco. He was neither distinguished for his bravery, nor revered for the procurement of the most scalps in battle. His chieftainship depended on his ability as an orator; he was the man generally most beloved by the tribe.⁴¹ Hereditary chieftainship was unknown among the Creeks; the micco's position was an elective one.⁴²

The chief presided over the tribal meetings, influenced the decisions of that body, represented the Khasati town at the annual confederacy convention in May, and was responsible for the Khasati town's civil administration.⁴² The chief often selected an aid, called by the Creeks the micco apotka (town chief), to assist him

³⁹Louis Le Clerc Milfort, Memoire ou coup-d'oeil rapide sur mes differens voyages et mon sejour dans la nation Creek. Paris, 1902, pp. 265-266. Quoted in John R. Swanton, Early history of the Creek Indians and their neighbors, Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 73, 1922, p. 278. The latter volume will hereafter be cited as Early history.

⁴⁰Bartram, Travels, op. cit., p. 338.

A micco of the Khasati was Old Red-shoe who also served as chief of the Alabamas. See Swan, op. cit., p. 263.

⁴¹Swan, op. cit., p. 279.

⁴²Bartram, Travels, op. cit., pp. 389-390.

with his duties.⁴³ At the same time the group of so-called second men served him as advisors.

Every Creek town also had a warrior chief who was responsible for all decisions made on war preparations and for waging the conflict.⁴⁴ He was appointed by the micco.

As the 18th century wore on many changes were taking place in the political organization. The micco was being superseded by the warrior chief. This was due to the pressure that was being exerted from the east by the whites on the Creek lands. In 1782 the English had withdrawn from the area, leaving the Creek towns unprotected against the movements of the Americans.⁴⁵ At this juncture that remarkable individual, half Scot, half Creek, Alexander McGillivray,⁴⁶ who once more was residing with his people, and who had come to have a tremendous influence over them, placed the warrior chief over the

⁴³Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 286.

⁴⁴Bartram, op. cit., p. 390.

On occasions the micco would overrule the judgement of the Great Warrior, an indication that the civil authority was greater than the military authority during this period. At particular times, however, the micco may have performed both functions. See Kilfort, op. cit., p. 237.

⁴⁵Swan, op. cit., p. 281.

⁴⁶For a fine biography of McGillivray, which includes his correspondence and related papers, see John W. Caughy, McGillivray of the Creeks, Univ. of Okla. Press, Norman, Okla., 1936.

miccos.⁴⁷ The miccos resisted, but to no avail.

After McGillivray's death on February 17, 1793, no man appeared of sufficient force and tact to take his place, and the government seems to have slipped back, at least in part, into ancient channels.⁴⁸

Religion

The Creeks revered Isakita inmissi, the "Master of Life" or "Holder of Breadth."⁴⁹ He it was who breathed life into the Creek people and into the animals of the forest. He was often referred to as Sata-laikati, "resident of the sky," which links the Master of Life with the worship of the sun, a trait characteristic of the southeastern culture area.⁵⁰

Early travellers and missionaries among the Creeks linked the idea of the Master of Life to a conception of monotheism. But, as Gatschet points out:

... but on closer investigation it will be found that the Creeks believed in many geni and mythic animals besides, two of which were the isti-papa and the snake horn as a war talisman. It would be singular indeed, if the Creeks were the only Indians of America who believed solely in the Great Spirit and not also in a number

⁴⁷Swan, op. cit., p. 281.

⁴⁸Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 327.

⁴⁹Gatschet, op. cit., p. 215.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 216.

of lesser conceptions of imagination, as dwarfs, giants, ogres, fairies, hobgoblins and earth spirits.⁵¹

Under the influence of the Christian missionaries the Creeks came to emphasize beliefs in good and bad spirits. The bad spirits they called isti futchigo, "the man acts perversely."⁵² Thus, the Creeks were given the Christian conception of the devil.

Caleb Swan writes:

They believe that the good spirit inhabits some distant unknown region, whose game is plenty, and goods very cheap, where corn grows all the year round, and the springs of water are never dried up.

They believe, also, that the bad spirit dwells a great ways off, in some dismal swamp, which is full of galling briars, and that he is commonly half starved, having no game, or bears oil, in all its territories.⁵³

That religion played an important role in the lives of the Creeks is reflected in their religious ceremonies, their taboos, their music and dancing, and their medical practices. Of special importance were the ceremonials known as the busk or the Green Corn Dance, and the asi or the taking of the Black Drink.⁵⁴

⁵¹Idem.

⁵²Idem.

⁵³Swan, op. cit., pp. 269-270.

⁵⁴For the best description of the Black Drink see Swan, op. cit., pp. 266-267.

This happy institution of the Boos-ke-tuh restores man to himself, to his family and to his nation. It is a general amnesty, which not only absolves the Indians from all crimes, murder only excepted, but seems to bury guilt itself in oblivion.⁵⁵

The Black Drink, on the other hand, had its religious implications, but was primarily a military ceremonial.⁵⁶

The taboos were associated chiefly with eating and drinking. The Creeks believed that the eater would be possessed of those qualities which the food contained. Adair states:

This is the reason that several of their old men recommend, and say that formerly their greatest chieftains observed a constant rule in their diet, and seldom ate of any animal of a grass quality, or heavy motion of body, fancying it conveyed a dullness through the whole system, and disabled them from exerting themselves with proper vigor in their martial, civil, and religious duties.⁵⁷

⁵⁵W. B. Hodgson, et. al., Creek Indian History. A reprint of "Creek Confederacy," by W. B. Hodgson, and "The Creek Country," by Col. Benjamin Hawkins. Americus Book Co. Americus, Ga., 1938. p. 73.

The bush was really the fourth in a series of ceremonies. Preceding it were the so-called "stamp dances". See Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 550.

The Kocasati were unique among the members of the Creek Confederacy in that they celebrated the coming of the new crop of beans as well as the crop of corn. See Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 568.

The Kocasati also sanctified the mulberry. See Adair, op. cit., p. 286.

⁵⁶Swan, op. cit., p. 266.

⁵⁷Adair, op. cit., pp. 139-140.

Food taboos were placed on the eating of many carnivores, against all beasts of prey except the bear, on horses, fowls, opossum, and reptiles of all kinds.⁵⁸

The Creeks, despite the fact that their main dish was boiled corn, were fruit eaters, although this practice often required the services of the shaman. As Swan points out:

The Indians eat every green wild fruit they can lay their hands upon, which is said to engender the fevers that sometimes attach them in the latter part of summer; and their children are often afflicted with worms from the same cause.⁵⁹

The Life Cycle

Birth

The Creeks loved children. They held women who couldn't bear children in contempt, assuming that sterility was due to the hostility of the Great Chief.⁶⁰ Creek fathers were particularly fond of boasting of the number of infants for which they had been responsible.

When a mother was about to deliver a child she was isolated from all beings and houses in the town.⁶¹ A small hut was built

⁵⁸ibid., pp. 136-143.

⁵⁹Swan, op. cit., p. 270.

⁶⁰Adair, op. cit., p. 76.

The Great Chief is Adair's equivalent to the Master of Life.

⁶¹Swan, op. cit., p. 271.

in which she stayed. The ~~same~~ custom was observed by women during the menstrual period.⁶² It was feared that persons coming into contact with her would be contaminated. Before returning to the town she was scrubbed clean. Continence was practiced thereafter "for a considerable period."⁶³

Should any of the Indian women violate this law of purity, they would be censured, and suffer for any sickness or death that might happen among the people, as the necessary effect of the divine anger for their polluting sin, contrary to their old traditional law of female purity...⁶⁴

The Creeks were indifferent to the sex of the new born. They frowned on the birth of twins.⁶⁵ The child was named shortly after birth. A girl retained her given name during the entire course of her life; a boy's name could be changed several times depending upon the number of times he had won war honors.⁶⁶

Relations between the Creek child and parents were marked by tenderness and affection. Caleb Swan comments on the bringing up of the Creek children:

⁶²Adair, op. cit., p. 130.

⁶³The considerable period was for four days.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 130-131.

⁶⁵It was the custom among several of the Creek tribes to kill one of the twins. The younger of the twins, it was believed, would make an excellent prophet. See Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 361.

⁶⁶Adair, op. cit., p. 200.

The father had no care of his own child. The invariable custom is, for the woman to keep and rear all the children, having the entire control over them until they are able to provide for themselves. They appear to have a sufficient natural affection for them; they never strike or whip a child for its faults: if a child requires punishment the mother scratches its leg and thighs with the point of a pin or needle until it bleeds; some keep a jaw bone of a gar fish, having two teeth entirely for the purpose.⁶⁷

The fact that the father had little to do with the education of his children is significant. It is an indication of the influence of the clan system. The father did not belong to his children's clan. Because education was a clan function, that duty was handled by the maternal uncle. The affection of the father for his children was not lessened on this account.

Scratching was not performed solely as a punishment. The Creeks believed that by bloodletting they were helping to teach the youngster, particularly the male, to withstand pain.⁶⁸

The later education of the boys prepared them largely for war. It was through the procurement of a scalp that a young man rose in prestige. Young men who had not yet performed heroically in battle were scorned. They were forced to perform menial tasks in and about the public square.⁶⁹ Girls learned from their mothers

⁶⁷Swan, op. cit., pp. 273-274.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 274.

⁶⁹Milfort, op. cit.



the proper household pursuits and were early taught to make baskets, pots, and to wield the hoe. Persons who were fine orators, medicine men, or players of the ball game, were also highly respected. These accomplishments could be acquired by the Creek youth if they so desired.

Marriage

The ceremonies among the Creek towns varied considerably. Bossu, who travelled among the Alabama, observed the customs there. These can be reckoned as being close to the Koasati practices.

Marriage ... is of a simple nature, and of no other form than mutual consent of the parties. The future husband makes presents of skins and provisions at the cabin of the father of his intended; after the meal there is a dance, they sing of the war exploits of the ancestors of the husband. Next day the oldest man presents the wife to the parents of her husband. That is the entire marriage ceremony... Those who are good warriors and good hunters choose the prettiest girls; the others have only the rejected and the ugly.⁷⁰

It is plain that trial marriage was known to the Creeks.

As Bartram points out:

They marry only for a year's time, and, according to ancient custom, at the expiration of the year they renew the marriage: but there is seldom an instance of their separating after they have children. If it should so happen, the mother takes

⁷⁰Bossu, op. cit., p. 21.

the children under her own protection, though the father is obliged to contribute towards their maintenance during their minority and the mother's widowhood.⁷¹

Polygamy was common.⁷² Divorces were easy to obtain.

A man among these peoples has the liberty of leaving his wife, but that seldom happens; if a woman is discovered committing adultery the least evil that can happen to her is to be repudiated.⁷³ Then the husband abandons the cabin; if he has children he takes care of the boys, and his wife of the girls; the wife must, however, remain a widow for a year, while the husband can remarry at once. He can take back his wife; she, however, cannot marry a second time until the end of a year.⁷⁴

Death and Burial

The dead body was placed in the sitting position, bound with deer sinews, and was lowered into a hole four feet deep under the cabin in which the deceased lived.⁷⁵ The cabin was then abandoned. When this custom was impractical the body was buried

⁷¹Bartram, op. cit., pp. 402-403.

⁷²Ibid., p. 403.

⁷³This view is sharply repudiated by Bartram. He claims that adultery was always punishable by cropping. Bartram op. cit., p. 403.

For a description of the cropping ceremony see Swan, op. cit., p. 269.

⁷⁴Bossu, op. cit., p. 20.

⁷⁵Bartram, op. cit., p. 403.

at the very place where the death occurred.⁷⁶ With the body were buried the warrior's favorite weapons, ornaments, and pipe.⁷⁷

After death the Creeks passed on to a new state of existence. Its nature depended largely on the kind of life the tribesman had led on earth. It was believed that a good provider, a keeper of the laws, a fine warrior, would be removed to a pleasant country, well watered and abounding in game.⁷⁸ Caleb Swan states that all the Creek men expected in after life to become great war leaders and hunters.⁷⁹

The Economy

The Creeks, the Koasati among them, participated in three economic pursuits: agriculture, hunting, and fishing.⁸⁰ Agriculture was basic in the economy. Maize provided the staple crop.⁸¹

⁷⁶Swan, op. cit., p. 270.

⁷⁷Idem.

⁷⁸Idem.

⁷⁹Idem.

⁸⁰Adair, op. cit., pp. 432-439.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 437.

but was often accompanied in the same field by peas, beans, squashes, pumpkins, melons, potatoes, and rice.⁸² The work in the fields was performed by both men and women,⁸³ although the initial chores of girdling the trees and preparing the ground for planting were the responsibility of the men alone.⁸⁴ For planting the dibble, or digging stick, was employed, while the principal implement used was a crude hoe made from a bent stick or piece of

⁸²Bartram, op. cit., p. 400., and Adair, op. cit., p. 438.

Swanton states that melons, potatoes, and rice, were contributions from the whites. Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 443. Adair, on the other hand, tells us that "different sorts of beans and peas" and "small tobacco" were introduced among the whites by the Indians. Adair, op. cit., p. 438.

Adair also states, that, "The women plant also pompions, and different sorts of melons, in separate fields, at a considerable distance from the town, where each owner raises an high scaffold, to over-look this favorite part of their vegetable possessions: and though the enemy sometimes kills them in this their strict watch duty, yet it is a very rare thing to pass by those fields without seeing them there at watch." Adair, op. cit., p. 438.

⁸³Charles C. Jones Jr., Antiquities of the Southern Indians. D. Appleton and Co., New York. 1875. p. 301.

⁸⁴For the methods employed in girdling the trees see Adair, op. cit., pp. 434-435.

flint.⁸⁵ Fertilization, known to other Indian tribes of North America, was apparently unknown to the Creeks.⁸⁶

Three types of corn were planted, a fast-maturing small variety which was ripe in two months, a yellow and flinty corn which they called "hommony corn," and the largest of all the varieties, a white soft grain, called "bread corn."⁸⁷

The chief part of the Indians began to plant their outfields, when the wild fruit is so ripe, as to draw off the birds from picking up the grain. This is their general rule, which is in the beginning of May, about the time the traders set off for the English settlements. Among several nations of Indians, each town usually works together. Previous thereto, an old beloved man warns the inhabitants to be ready to plant on a prefixed day. At the dawn of it, one by orders goes aloft,

⁸⁵Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 691.

Jones describes the stone hoe also commonly employed: "This relic is made of greenstone. It is five inches and a quarter in length, and nearly two inches and three-quarters in width. For a distance of more than two inches and a half from the edge it exhibits on both sides that delicate polish which is engendered only by constant attrition and long continued use. The groove afforded the means of lashing it securely to a handle whose end was doubtless bent for that purpose, so that the blade should remain at right angles to it. It will be observed that this implement is slightly curved, and has very much the appearance of the half of a grooved axe split in twain longitudinally. It is, nevertheless, a complete and well-formed hoe. Remembering the shallow manner in which the natives cultivated the soil, we can readily believe that it would have abundantly answered the purpose for which we suppose it to have been designed. Jones, op. cit., pp. 301-302.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 691.

⁸⁷Adair, op. cit., p. 436.

and whoops to them with shrill calls, "that the new year is far advanced, - that he who expects to eat, must work, - and that he who will not work, must expect to pay the fine according to old custom, or leave the town, as they will not sweat themselves for an healthy idle waster.⁸⁸

Once planted the maize was allowed to grow with little attention from the tribesmen.

In July, when the chestnuts and corn are green and full grown, they half boil the former, and take off the rind; and having sliced the milky, swelled, long rows of the latter, the women pound it in a large wooden mortar, which is wide at the mouth, and gradually narrows to the bottom; then they knead both together, wrap them up in green corn-blades of various sizes, about an inch thick, and boil them well as they do every kind of seethed food. This sort of bread is very tempting to the taste, and reckoned most delicious to their strong palates.⁸⁹

Of the mortar Adair says:

The Indians always used mortars instead of mills, and they had them with almost every other convenience, when we first opened a trade with them; they cautiously burned a large log to a proper level and length, placed fire a-top and wet mortar round it, in order to give the utensil a proper form; and when the fire was extinguished, or occasion required, they chopped the inside with their stone implements, patiently continuing the slow process till they finished the machine to the intended purpose.⁹⁰

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 436.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 437.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 447.

The land was tilled by the tribespeople in common. On the island in the Coosa River each Koasati family or clan was allotted a piece of earth, carefully demarcated by an artificial boundary,⁹¹ to which it could devote its efforts. One levy was exacted from the farmers; a fixed portion of the harvest was donated to the public granary for storage.⁹² In this way the Koasati and their Creek neighbors protected themselves during war emergencies, against poor yields, and permitted travellers through their country to be fed at the expense of the entire community.⁹³ To further insure an adequate food supply individual Creek families maintained behind their dwellings small gardens in which peas, beans, maize, and pumpkins were planted.⁹⁴ These personal plots were cared for either by the women or children.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, the travellers through the Creek country do not provide us with the dimensions of the Creek fields. We know nothing of their size.

⁹¹Bartram, op. cit., p. 400.

⁹²Ibid., p. 401.

⁹³Idem.

Jones says, "Such storehouses served as depositories not only for maize, fruits, nuts, and roots, but also for dried fishes, alligators, dogs, deer, and other jerked meats. These were first exposed upon a scaffolding, made of poles, beneath which a fire was kindled and kept burning until the meat, thoroughly smoked and dried, was thus preserved from early decomposition." Jones, op. cit., p. 308.

⁹⁴Adair, op. cit., pp. 435-436.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 436.

Hunting and fishing, the work of the men, supplemented agriculture.⁹⁶ Hunted were the deer, bear, beaver, otter, raccoon, and squirrel. The deer and bear were the prize animals, the former for his flesh, the latter for his fat.⁹⁷

Bossu describes the favorite method of stalking the deer:

An Indian takes the head of a roe-buck and dries it; he then carries it with him into the woods, where he covers his back with the skin of the animal; he puts his hand into the neck of the dried head, taking care to put little hoops under the skin to keep it firm on the hand; he then kneels down, and in that attitude, mimicking the voice of these creatures, he shews the head; the roe-buck are deceived by it and come very near the hunters who are sure to kill them.⁹⁸

Adair describes the method of catching the bear:

When they (the bears) take up their winter quarters, they continue the greater part of two months, in almost an entire state of inactivity: during that time, their tracks reach no farther than to the next water, of which they seldom drink, as they frequently suck their paws in their lonely recess, and impoverish their bodies, to nourish them. While they are employed in that surprising task of nature, they cannot contain themselves in silence, but are so well pleased with their repast that they continue singing hum um um: as their pipes are none of the weakest, the Indians by this means often are led to them from a considerable distance, and then shoot them down. But they are forced to cut a hole near the root of the tree, wherein the she bear and her cubs are lodged, and drive them out by the force of fire and suffocating smoke; and

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 432-434.

⁹⁷Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 693.

⁹⁸Bossu, op. cit., p. 259. Quoted in Jones, op. cit., p. 323.

as the tree is partly rotten, and the inside dry, it soon takes fire. In this case, they become very fierce, and would fight any kind of enemy; but, commonly, at the first shot, they are killed or mortally wounded.⁹⁹

The favorite weapon employed for the kill was the bow of black locust or hickory, and the arrow manufactured from cane.¹⁰⁰ On hand, too, was the white man's gun, the adoption of which was resisted for a time, although eventually accepted as part of a changing pattern. The Indian learned to use it well.¹⁰¹ When pursuing small game or birds the Creeks were adept in the use of the cane blow gun.

The young savages also use a very strait cane, eight or nine feet long, cleared of its inward divisions of the joints; in this they put a small arrow, whose one end is covered one-third of the whole length with cotton, or something similar to it;¹⁰² this they hold nearest their mouth, and blow it so expertly as seldom to miss a mark fifteen or twenty yards off, and that so violently as to kill

⁹⁹Adair, op. cit., pp. 330-331.

¹⁰⁰Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 692.

By 1750 arrow points were also being made of metal. The use of thin copper may well have been an ancient practice. See Timberlake, Memoires of Lieut. Henry Timberlake (1756-1763). Annotation, introduction and index by Samuel Cole Williams. Continental Book Co. Marietta, Ga., 1948. pp. 85-86.

¹⁰¹Adair, op. cit., p. 457.

¹⁰²The arrows were often feathered with the wool of a thistle. See Bossu, op. cit., p. 306. Quoted in Jones, op. cit., p. 256.

squirrels and birds therewith.¹⁰³

Fishing was carried on by utilizing the bow and arrow, hook and line (used sparingly in the Southeast), spear, gun fire, by building crails or dams, by hand nets, fish poisoning, and the fire lure.¹⁰⁴

When they see large fish near the surface of the water, they fire directly upon them, sometimes only with powder, which noise and surprize however so stupifies them, that they instantly turn up their bellies and float a top, when the fisherman secures them. If they shoot at fish not deep in the water, either with an arrow or bullet, they aim at the lower part of the belly, if they are near; and lower, in like manner, according to the distance, which seldom fails of killing. In a dry summer season, they gather horse chestnuts, and different sorts of roots, which having pounded pretty fine, and steeped awhile in a trough, they scatter this mixture over the surface of a middle-sized pond, and stir it about with poles, till the water is sufficiently impregnated with the intoxicating bittern. The fish are soon inebriated, and make to the surface of the water, with their bellies upermost. The fishers gather them in baskets, and barbicue the largest, covering them carefully over at night to preserve them from the supposed putrifying influence of the moon. It seems, that fish caught in this manner, are not poisoned, but only stupified; for they prove very whole some food to us who frequently use them. By experiments, when they are speedily moved into good water, they revive in a few minutes.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Bernard Romans, A concise natural history of East and West Florida. Vol. I. (Vol. II unpublished) New York, 1775. p. 17. Quoted in Jones, op. cit., pp. 256-257.

¹⁰⁴Adair, op. cit., pp. 432-434.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 432.

Adair explains the art of catching fish by building dams made of cane and hickory splinters:

They lay these at a fall of water, where stones are placed in two sloping lines from each bank, till they meet together in the middle of the rapid stream, where the entangled fish are soon drowned. Above such a place, I have known them to fasten a wreath of long grape vines together, to reach across the river, with stones fastened at proper distances to rake the bottom; they will swim a mile with it whooping, and plunging all the way, driving the fish before them into their large cane pots. With this draught, which is a very heavy one, they make a town feast, or feast of love, of which every one partakes in the most social manner, and afterward they dance together, singing Halelu-yah, and the rest of their usual praises to the divine essence, for his beautiful gifts to the beloved people.¹⁰⁶

The use of substantial netting necessitates the use of sinkers and fishing plummetts.¹⁰⁷ Two varieties of sinkers were employed, the perforated and the grooved.¹⁰⁸ Both were commonly made of soapstone, although slate or clay were also used. Their weights varied considerably, from one ounce to one pound.¹⁰⁹ The perforated varieties indicate greater craftsmanship.¹¹⁰ Little

¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 432-433.

¹⁰⁷Jones, op. cit., p. 337.

¹⁰⁸Idem. See illustrations opposite p. 338.

¹⁰⁹Idem.

¹¹⁰Perforations of a quarter of an inch to an inch in diameter were placed at the center or at the edges of the stone. On the grooved varieties the notches were merely rudely chipped.

labor was expended on the grooved sinkers. Plummets were either grooved about the center or had two or more grooves intersecting each other at right angles.¹¹¹

Trade, too, was an important factor in the economy.¹¹² It has been significant even in pre-Columbian days, the Creeks exchanging goods with other Indian tribes as far north as Lake Superior and with their near neighbors on the Gulf of Mexico.¹¹³ Copper, flint and stone implements, pipes, ornaments of shell, pearls, animal skins, obsidian and mica were exchanged.¹¹⁴ These were carried by the Indian traders¹¹⁵ along well established trails through the wilderness.¹¹⁶

The coming of the white man, particularly the trader to

¹¹¹Jones, op. cit., pp. 338-339.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 63.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 64.

¹¹⁴Ibid., pp. 63-64.

¹¹⁵Indian traders were held in high esteem. They were treated generously and allowed safe passage through all tribal territories even in time of war.

¹¹⁶In early colonial times the Koasati town was served by the Alabama and Mobile trail which led south to Mobile Bay, the Alabama-Chickasaw trail which led northwest into the Chickasaw country, the Alabama, Choctaw and Metchez trail which led west to the Choctaw country, and the Augusta, Macon, Montgomery and Mobile trail which led eastward to the Atlantic coast. A less important trail led to the north. See the W. E. Myer map in Swanton, 42nd. Ann. Rept., op. cit., opposite p. 748.

the Creek towns, had far-reaching effects upon the Indian economy. As early as 1744 the French traders had procured from the Indians 100,000 deer pelts, as well as buffalo, otter and beaver skins.¹¹⁷ These were exchanged for guns, bullets, powder, razors, needles, knives, woolen goods, ribbons, blue and red limbourg,¹¹⁸ blankets, and brandy.¹¹⁹ The English traders were also active at the time. In 1741 forty-six English traders, operating from Augusta, along with 305 pack horses, were engaged in trade with the Creeks and Chickasaws.¹²⁰ Their prime interest was the deer pelt, in exchange for which they gave up ammunition, guns, rum, and Stroud cloth.¹²¹

¹¹⁷Archives Nationales, Colonies, Paris, Serie C13, Correspondance Generale, Louisiana, 1679-1763, vols. I-XLV. vol. 28. fols. 35-36. Quoted in N. M. Miller Surrey, The commerce of Louisiana during the French regime, 1699-1763. Columbia Univ., New York. Longmans, Green & Co., agents, 1916. p. 357.

Transcripts and selections of the Correspondance Generale can be found in the Louisiana Historical Society Library, Tulane Univ., New Orleans, La., 2 vols.

¹¹⁸Limbourg was a cloth manufactured in red, blue, white, and black colors. The red and blue were favored by the Indians, the black and white were worn by the negroes. Limbourg was measured in ells. An ell ranged in length between the Flemish 27" and the English 45". The French ell was probably close to the former figure.

¹¹⁹The Present State of the Country and Inhabitants, European and Indians of Louisiana on the North Continent of America, by an officer at New Orleans to his friend at Paris, London, 1774. p. 11. Quoted in Surrey, op. cit., p. 358.

¹²⁰Collections of the Georgia Historical Society. 6 vols. Savannah. 1840-1904. Vol. II, p. 124.

¹²¹Adair, op. cit., p. 9.

With two bitter competitors in the field, each attempting to secure a monopoly, the Indians stood to gain. It seems certain that the Creeks came to favor those traders who could supply them with the best goods at the cheapest prices.¹²² During the decade 1740-1750, the Alabama and Koasati towns were under the influence of the French.¹²³ This may have due to the fact that French powder was easier to deliver from Mobile Bay to the Alabama and Koasati towns than it was to bring it inland from the English trading sites on the Atlantic coast.¹²⁴ In addition the French powder was clearly superior to the English powder.¹²⁵ And it must be remembered that Ft. Toulouse existed to protect the French interests.¹²⁶

To offset the disadvantages the English attempted to sell more rum to the Indians. They did not, however, sell to the Koasati, which maddened the latter, and caused them to complain to the French.¹²⁷ In 1751 the English traders visited the Koasati

¹²²Surrey, op. cit., p. 99.

¹²³Ibid., p. 357.

¹²⁴Ibid., pp. 358-359.

¹²⁵Idem.

¹²⁶See pp. 6-7, this ms.

¹²⁷Surrey, op. cit., p. 359.

town in order to stir up trouble against the French.¹²⁸ It was not, however, until the French were driven from the continent in 1763 that the English enjoyed a clear trading monopoly. Robert Walton, trader to the Koasati town, introduced the pig to the Indian.¹²⁹ Before long fences appeared in the Koasati fields, and the Indians became actively engaged in stock raising.¹³⁰

Clothing

By 1750 the clothing worn by the Creeks had already been considerably modified through contacts with the whites. Adair comments:

They formerly wore shirts, made of drest deer-skins, for their summer visiting dress: but their winter-hunting clothes were long and shaggy, made of the skins of panthers, bucks, bears, beavers, and otters; the fleshy sides outward, sometimes doubled, and always softened like velvet-cloth, though they retained their fur and hair ... The women's dress consists only in a broad softened skin, or several small skins sewed together, which they wrap and tie round their waist, reaching a little below their knees: in cold weather, they wrap themselves in the softened skins of buffalo calves, with the wintry shagged wool inward, never forgetting to anoint, and tie up their hair, except in their time of mourning. The men wear, for ornament, and the conveniencies of hunting, thin deer-skin boots, well smoked, that reach so high up their thighs, as with their jackets to secure them from the brambles and braky thickets. They sew them about five inches from the edges, which are formed into tassels, to which they fasten fawns trotters, and small

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 361.

¹²⁹Hodgson, op. cit., p. 34.

¹³⁰Idem.

pieces of tinkling metal, or wild turkey-cock-spurs. The beaus used to fasten the like to their war pipes, with the addition of a piece of an enemy's scalp with a tuft of long hair hanging down from the middle of the stem, each of them painted red: and they still observe that old custom, only they choose bell-buttons, to give a greater sound.¹³¹

For summer wear the men often wore no other garment than the breech clout.

... it usually consists of a piece of blue cloth, about eighteen inches wide; this they pass between their thighs, and both ends being taken up and drawn through a belt round their waist, the ends fall down, one before, and the other behind, not quite to the knee; this flap is usually plaited and indented at the ends, and ornamented with beads, tinsel lace, &c.¹³²

Swan estimated that all the children up through the age of fourteen went about naked in all seasons of the year.¹³³ He observed, too, that the women wore only a petticoat of blue Stroud cloth in the summer; they wore nothing above the waist.¹³⁴ In the winter a mantle was thrown over their shoulders.¹³⁵ The men, too, were apt to wear a mantle of red or blue color on festive occasions, or when it became quite cold on winter eve-

¹³¹Adair, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

¹³²Bartram, Travels, op. cit., p. 394.

¹³³Swan, op. cit., p. 275.

¹³⁴Idem.

¹³⁵Idem.

nings.¹³⁶

Robes of feathers, particularly turkey feathers, were worn.¹³⁷

The feather, worn as part of the headdress, was of peculiar importance to the Creeks. It was a symbol of authority, the mark of a warrior chief, although all the Creek men are said to have worn feathers at special occasions, on raiding trips, and at Creek council meetings.¹³⁸

Bartram describes the hair styles:

The men shave their head, leaving only a narrow crest or comb, beginning at the crown of the head, where it is about two inches broad and about the same height, and stands frized upright; but the crest tending backwards, gradually widens, covering the hinder part of the head and back of the neck: the lank hair behind is ornamented with pendant silver quills, and then jointed or articulated silver plates; and usually the middle fascicle of hair, being by far the longest, is wrapped in a large quill of silver, or the joint of a small reed, curiously sculptured and painted, the hair continuing through it terminates in a tail or tassel.¹³⁹

¹³⁶Bartram, *Travels*, op. cit., pp. 394-395.

¹³⁷Swanton, 42nd. Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 682.

¹³⁸Adair, op. cit., pp. 426-427.

¹³⁹Bartram, *Travels*, op. cit., p. 393.

It is worth noting that the Choctaw, neighbors of the Creeks, wore their hair long and were considered peculiar.¹⁴⁰

Tattooing and painting the body, particularly the face, were practiced.

The head, neck, and breast, are painted with vermilion, and some of the warriors have the skin of the breast, and muscular parts of the body, very curiously inscribed, or adorned with hieroglyphick scrolls, flowers, figures of animals, stars, crescents, and the sun in the center of the breast. This painting of the flesh, I understand is performed in their youth, by pricking the skin with a needle, until the blood starts, and rubbing in a blueish tinct, which is as permanent as their life. The shirt hangs loose about the waist, like a frock, or split down before, resembling a gown, and is sometimes wrapped close, and the waist encircled by a curious belt or sash.¹⁴¹

The Creeks may have worn nose ornaments.¹⁴²

Ordinarily the Creeks did not employ footwear of any kind.¹⁴³ However, the moccasin was worn when ventures were undertaken into the forest or for particular ceremonies. Dress moccasins were prepared from deer skins, common moccasins from bear or elk skins.¹⁴⁴

Contacts with the Europeans produced significant changes. Special mention should be made of the English and French traders

¹⁴⁰Swanton, 42nd. Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 683.

¹⁴¹Bartram, Travels, op. cit., p. 394.

¹⁴²This is an inference based on the fact that Koasati of the present-day community recall nose ornaments in their more recent past.

¹⁴³Adair, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁴⁴Idem.

in this connection. The English introduced Stroud cloth, manufactured in Stroud, Gloucestershire, to the Indians.¹⁴⁵ The rich scarlet or blue calico was simply wrapped around the waist several times and allowed to hang to the knees; it was then secured with a leather belt. The French traders introduced limbourg, a cloth similar to Stroud, to the Creeks.¹⁴⁶

There is evidence that the Creeks resisted clothing changes. They had an aversion against wearing breeches, affixing to them the idea of femininity, and used derogatory remarks to denounce men who wore them.¹⁴⁷ A more practical reason, perhaps, was the Creek practice of urinating in the sitting position.¹⁴⁸ The breeches would no doubt inconvenience them when following such a practice.

Basketry

The Creeks were basket makers who wove cane baskets, employ-

¹⁴⁵Idem.

¹⁴⁶See footnote 118, p. 54, this ms.

¹⁴⁷Adair, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 9.

ing the twilled plaiting technique.¹⁴⁹

They make the handsomest clothes baskets I ever saw considering their materials. They divide large swamp canes into long, thin splinters which they dye of several colors and manage the workmanship so well that the inside and outside are covered with a beautiful variety of pleasing figures; ...¹⁵⁰

The largest basket of the time was nearly 36 inches long, 18 inches broad, and 12 inches deep.¹⁵¹ A variety of baskets of lesser dimensions were also created.

Pottery

The Creeks were fine potters.

They make earthen pots of very different sizes, so as to contain from two to ten gallons; large pitchers to carry water; bowls, dishes, platters, basons, and a prodigious number of other vessels of such antiquated forms as would be tedious to describe, and impossible to name.¹⁵²

The material employed was clay of red, yellow, and blue hues, which was tempered, mixed, and kneaded with gravel, shell or pulverized mica.¹⁵³ This was thought to give a great consistency

¹⁴⁹Woven basketry has warp and weft. In twilled work, a variety of woven basketry, each element of the weft must pass over and then under two or more warp elements. Standard Creek practice was four over four under. See Hodge, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 133.

¹⁵⁰Adair, op. cit., p. 456.

¹⁵¹Idem.

¹⁵²Idem., p. 456.

¹⁵³Jones, op. cit., p. 451.

to the mass and render it capable of resisting fire.¹⁵⁴

Shaping and decorating the vessels was the work of the women.¹⁵⁵

Their method of glazing them, is, they place them over a large fire of smoky pitch pine, which makes them smooth, black, and firm. Their lands abound with proper clay, for that use; and even with porcelain, as has been proved by experiment.¹⁵⁶

The ceramic art, however, was destined to crumble before European importations. Copper and iron kettles, and crockery replaced the earthenware pots. The new wares, purchased cheaply, and found to be a great improvement over the old, could be found throughout the Greek country in 1750.¹⁵⁷

Bartram's comment is especially noteworthy:

As to the mechanic arts or manufactures, at present they have scarcely any thing worth observation, since they are supplied with necessities, conveniences, and even superfluities by the white traders. The men perform nothing except erecting their mean habitations, forming their canoes, stone pipes, tambour, eagles tail or standard, and some other trifling matters; for war and hunting are their principal employments. The women are more vigilant, and

¹⁵⁴Idem.

¹⁵⁵Bartram, Travels, op. cit., p. 401.

For the methods used in pottery-making in the Southeast see Jones, op. cit., pp. 441-466. Illustrations of pottery types and designs can be found opposite pp. 454, 456, 458.

¹⁵⁶Adair, op. cit., p. 456.

¹⁵⁷Jones, op. cit., pp. 449-450.

turn their attention to various manual employments; they make all their pottery or earthenware, moccasins, spin and weave the curious belts and diadems for the men, fabricate lace, fringe, embroider and decorate their apparel, &c.¹⁵⁸

Adair was of the opinion that the Indian could no longer live independently.¹⁵⁹ He needed the trader to supply him with essentials.

The Calumet

When a stranger entered a Creek town for the first time he was offered the enjoyment of smoking a pipe.¹⁶⁰

This Calumet is the most mysterious Thing in the World among the Savages of the Continent of the Northern America; for it is us'd in all their important Transactions: However, it is nothing else but a large Tobacco-Pipe made of Red, Black, or White Marble: The Head is finely polish'd, and the Quill, which is commonly two foot and a half long, is made of a pretty strong Reed or Cane, adorn'd with Feathers of all Colors, interlac'd with Locks of Women's Hair ... every Nation adorns the Calumet as they think according to their own Genius and the Birds they have in their Country.

A Pipe such as I have describ'd it, is a Pass and safe Conduct amongst all the Allies of the Nation who has given it; and in all Embassies, the Ambassadors carry that Calumet as the Symbol of peace, which is always respected; for the Savages are generally persuaded that a great Misfortune would befall 'em if they violated the Publick

¹⁵⁸Bartram, Travels, op. cit., p. 401.

¹⁵⁹Adair, op. cit., p. 456.

¹⁶⁰Romans, op. cit., no p. no. supplied. Quoted in Jones, op. cit., p. 397.

Faith of the Calumet. All their Enterprises, Declarations of War, or Conclusions of Peace, as well as all the rest of their Ceremonies are Sealed, if I may be permitted to say so, with this Calumet. They fill that Pipe with the best Tobacco they have, and then present it to those with whom they have concluded any great Affair, and smook out of the same after them. I had certainly perish'd in my Voyage, had it not been for this Calumet or Pipe.¹⁶¹

In addition to the calumet, the Indians also made small pipes, in which they smoked tobacco, leaves, weeds, and bark.¹⁶² These were carried with them on their travels; the calumet was employed at home.

Games

Stewart Culin divides the games played by the Indians of North America into two categories, games of chance and games of dexterity.¹⁶³ Games in both categories were found among all the tribes of the continent.

The Creeks of 1750 played at least one type of dice game, a game of chance, and were adept players at the hoop and pole as well as the racket game, both games of dexterity.¹⁶⁴ The racket

¹⁶¹Louis Hennepin, A new discovery of a vast country in America, (London, 1698), ed. and trans. by R. G. Thwaites, Chicago, 1903. pp. 93-94. Quoted in Jones, op. cit., pp. 386-387.

¹⁶²Jones, op. cit., p. 410.

¹⁶³Stewart Culin, Games of the North American Indians, 24th Ann. Rept., Bur. Amer. Ethn., 1907. pp. 605-607.

¹⁶⁴Adair, op. cit., pp. 423-431.

game, often referred to as the ball play was the principal game of the men. The contrivances used were a set of rackets, the ball, and the posts which served as the goals.

Pope describes both the game and the contrivances:

He (Alexander McGillivray) invited me to a Ball-Match, about 10 miles from his house, between two Townships. Sixty-two alert young Fellows were selected from each Town. The goals were set up about a quarter of a Mile apart, near the Center of an extensive Campaign or Prairie. - They consist of two blazed Saplings fixed in the Ground about 10 Feet asunder at either End, thro' which every Time either Party Throws the ball with their Rackets, they are entitled to count one - The Number of the game is arbitrary. - Midway between the Goals, the ball is thrown up alternately by two old Men, who are mutually chosen by the contending Parties to decide all Controversies which may arise in the course of the game - Upon throwing up the Ball a violent Struggle ensues between the Parties which sometimes lasts 8 or 10 Minutes, before either Side can give it a cast; and when they do, there are others of their opponents ready to intercept and give it an adverse direction. - On this Game Property to a very considerable amount is generally risked, consisting of Broaches, Gorgets, Medals, paints, Arms and Ammunition piled up in a pyramidal Form. Sometimes their whole Family Stock of Food and Raiment is hazzarded. - A dislocated Joint or Fractured Bone is not uncommon: Suffer what they may, you'll never see an angry look or hear a threatening word among them.

The Players divest themselves of all their Cloaths, except their Flaps. They ingeniously disguise themselves with various coloured Paints and assume the Semblance of Rattle-Snakes entwined. Spiral Streaks of red, white and blue, alternately adorn their other parts. - The vanquished Party immediately upon the conclusion of the Game, betake themselves to their Heels, in Order to avoid

the Scoffs and Ridicule of their boastful Conquerors.¹⁶⁵

Thus, the ball play was often a contest between two Creek towns of opposite fires, the relations between which were not always amicable.¹⁶⁶ The ball play served to end disputes, or often to maintain them. Revenge for a previous defeat was a motive for a new challenge the following year.

Connected with the ball play were a series of religious practices, taboos, and incantations, which for weeks occupied the participants prior to the struggle.¹⁶⁷

Women also participated in a racket game in which men were participants on the other side. While the latter were compelled to use the rackets in sending the ball through the air, the women employed only their bare hands.¹⁶⁸

The hoop and pole game of the Creeks was known as "chunkey" or "ruming hard labor."¹⁶⁹ Only two contestants participated. One would hurl a stone disc "about 2 fingers broad at the edge

¹⁶⁵John Pope, Tour through the northern and western territories of the United States. Richmond, 1792. pp. 49-51. Quoted in Swanton, 42nd. Ann. Rept., op. cit., pp. 458-459.

¹⁶⁶See footnote 37, p. 33, this ms.

¹⁶⁷Adair, op. cit., p. 430.

¹⁶⁸Swanton, 42nd. Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 467.

¹⁶⁹Adair, op. cit., pp. 430-431.

and two spans round¹⁷⁰ toward the center of the chunky yard or playing field, while both participants armed with poles, each eight feet in length, would attempt to strike the moving stone.¹⁷¹

Among the games of chance played by the Creeks was the dice game of which the Koasati were particularly fond.¹⁷² The contrivances were five cane sticks and a board for keeping count of the moves made. The canes were split down the middle so that the concave and convex sides could be distinguished. They were thrown by hand, the score reading from the number of cane sticks coming to rest with the concave side facing the sky. The scores were then recorded.

Music and Dancing

Bartram tells us that the Creeks were fond of both music and dancing.¹⁷³

... their music is both vocal and instrumental; but of the latter they have scarcely any thing worth the name; the tambour, rattle-gourd, and a kind of flute made of a joint of reed or the tibia of the deer's leg: on this instrument they perform badly, and at best it is a hideous melancholy discord, than harmony.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 431.

¹⁷¹Idem.

¹⁷²This is an assumption based on the fact that the present-day people have known the game through the entire life of the present-day community.

¹⁷³Bartram, Travels, op. cit., p. 395.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 395-396.

Performance on the tambourine and the rattle pleased
Bartram more however.¹⁷⁵

Adair contributes the following:

Their music consists of two clay-pot drums covered on the top with thin wet deer-skins, drawn very tight, on which each of the noisy musicians beats with a stick, accompanying the noise with their voices; at the same time, the dancers prance it away, with wild and quick sliding steps, and variegated postures of body, to keep time with the drums, and rattling calabashes shaken by some of their religious heroes, each of them singing their old religious songs, and striking notes in tympano et choro.¹⁷⁶

To the music a number of steps were danced.

...the most civil, and indeed the most admired and practised amongst themselves, is a slow shuffling alternate step; both feet move forward one after the other, first the right foot foremost, and next the left, moving one after the other, in opposite circles, i. e. first a circle of young men, and within a circle of young women, moving together opposite ways, the men with the course of the sun, and the females contrary to it; the men strike their arm with the open hand, and the girls clap hands, and raise their shrill sweet voices, answering an elevated shout of the men at stated times of termination of the stanzas; and the girls perform an interlude or chorus separately.¹⁷⁷

Favorite dances of the Creeks were the horned owl, snake, chicken, alligator, rabbit, bear, and fish dances.¹⁷⁸ The Koasati

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 336.

¹⁷⁶Adair, op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁷⁷Bartram, op. cit., p. 396.

¹⁷⁸Swanton, 42nd. Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 523.

particularly enjoyed the duck, horse, eagle, horned owl, and garfish dances; the garfish was totemic to the Koasati town.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 531.

CHAPTER III

THE CULTURE OF THE KOASATI (1800-1884)

In 1750 the Koasati lived on the western fringe of the Creek country, three miles south of the Coosa-Tallapoosa confluence, in the broad lowland valley of the Alabama River.¹ They farmed the fields on both sides of the Alabama and raised crops of maize, peas, and beans, in the fields of the island at the mouth of the Coosa.² They hunted bear and deer in the neighboring forest and sent war parties far to the west - to the Tombigbee River and the Choctaw country. They fished and swam in the Alabama River and made journeys by canoe south toward the French city of Mobile and north to Ft. Toulouse and to the neighboring Creek towns and villages.³ They exchanged Stroud cloth, ammunition, guns, and rum for deer pelts with the English traders and enjoyed, by virtue of their proximity to Mobile, a trading advantage with the French from whom they purchased limbourg, iron kettles, powder, razors, and needles.⁴

¹See Hawkins' description of the Koasati town, pp. 10-11, this ms.

²See p. 10, this ms.

³See p. 11, this ms.

⁴See p. 53, this ms.

When, however, in 1763 the French were eliminated from the Alabama-Tombigbee basin, Koasati in small bands began to leave the mother town on the Alabama.⁵ A public square was erected on the Tombigbee, but was soon abandoned.⁶ As the whites, particularly the Georgians and Carolinians pressed westward, so too did the Indians. Bands of the Koasati appeared in Louisiana for the first time in 1795.⁷ Before long Koasati settlement had spread westward into Texas. Morse found 240 Koasati on the Trinity River and 50 Koasati on the Neches River in 1822.⁸ There were 350 tribesmen on Red River, Louisiana in the same year.⁹ A decade later only 82 Koasati remained in the mother town on the Alabama,¹⁰ and by 1850 the Red River settlement was being abandoned in favor of the Texas communities.¹¹

⁵Why the Koasati were apprehensive concerning the French departure is well stated in Adair's statement quoted on p. 3, this ms.

⁶See pp. 8-9, this ms.

⁷See p. 9, this ms.

⁸Jedidiah Morse, A report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian affairs, comprising a narrative of a tour performed in the summer of 1820, New Haven, Conn. 1822, p. 373. Quoted in John R. Swanton, Early history of the Creek Indians and their neighbors. Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 73, 1922, p. 201.

⁹Ibid., p. 373.

¹⁰Senate Doc. 512, 23rd Cong., 1st sess., IV, p. 267.

¹¹See p. 12, this ms.

Meanwhile, Koasati bands were also collecting on the Calcasieu River in Louisiana seven miles northeast of the present city of Kinder.¹² When an epidemic struck the Texas communities a place of refuge was found by many of the stricken in the Koasati community on the Calcasieu.¹³ At the time of the Civil War this so-called Indian Village site was the largest of the Koasati communities.¹⁴

It is regretable that in the century between the Treaty of Paris (1763) and the Civil War (1861-1865), the years of the Koasati migrations,¹⁵ that little was recorded of the tribe and their lifeway. The best accounts are furnished by Stiggins and Sibley. Stiggins writes:

About the year seventeen hundred and ninety-three there was an old Cowassada chieftain that was called Red Shoes, who was violently opposed to their making war on the Chickasaws, and as it was determined on contrary to his will he resolved to quit the nation, so he and a mulatto man who resided with the Alabamas named Billy Ashe headed a party of about twenty families, part Cowassadas and the rest Alabamas, and removed to the Red River and tried a settlement

¹²See p. 12, this ms.

¹³See p. 13, this ms.

¹⁴See p. 13, this ms.

¹⁵The Koasati were to make one other migration after this period - the movement to the present-day community near Elton, Louisiana in 1884. See pp. 13-14, this ms.

about sixty miles up from its mouth, but on trial they were so annoyed and infested by a small red ant that were so very numerous in that country, that they found it hardly possible to put any thing beyond their reach or destruction, so after living there a few years they removed finally from thence to the province of Texas, on the river Trinity, a few miles from the mouth of said river, where they now live.¹⁶

Sibley's account supplies many details:

Conchattas are almost the same people as the Allibamis, but came over only ten years ago; first lived on Bayau Chico, in Appelousa district, but, four years ago, moved to the river Sabine, settled themselves on the east bank, where they now live, in nearly a south direction from Natchitoch, and distant about eighty miles. They call their number of men one hundred and sixty, but say, if they were altogether, they would amount to two hundred. Several families of them live in detached settlements. They are good hunters, and game is plenty about where they are. A few days ago, a small party of them were here,¹⁷ consisting of fifteen persons, men, women, and children, who were on their return from a bear hunt up Sabine. They told me they had killed one hundred and eighteen; but this year an uncommon number of bears have come down. One man alone, on Sabine, during the Summer and Fall, hunting, killed four hundred deer, sold his skins at forty dollars a hundred. The bears, this year, are not so fat as common; they usually yield from eight to twelve gallons of oil, each of which never sells for less than a dollar a gallon, and the skin a dollar more; no great quantity of the meat is saved; what the hunters don't use when out, they generally give to their dogs. The Conchattas are friendly with all other Indians, and speak well of their neighbors the Carankouas, who, they say, live about eighty miles south of them, on the bay, which I believe, is the

¹⁶From the Stiggins ms. Quoted in Swanton, op. cit., p. 204.

¹⁷Sibley was writing from the post at Natchitoches.

nearest point to the sea from Natchitoches. A few families of Choctaws have lately settled near them from Bayau Beauf. The Conchattas speak Creek, which is their native language,¹⁸ and Chactaw, and several of them English, and one or two of them can read it a little.¹⁹

For the most part, however, we must rely upon the memory of the tribesmen of the present-day community²⁰ for knowledge of the Koasati culture between 1800 and 1884. The memory is often dim and hazy; the tales told have often been thrice-told through the generations and are, perhaps, marred by additions or subtractions; exact dating is virtually impossible for the Indian is even vague on the actual dating of important events in his own lifetime.²¹ Then, too, one must add that the knowledge gained from the Indian is subject to the investigator's interpretation and his judgment is not always infallible.²² These inadequacies must be kept

¹⁸See footnote 28, p. 10, this ms.

¹⁹John Sibley in Annals of Congress, 9th Cong., 2nd sess., 1085-86 (1806-7).

²⁰For the author's definition of "present-day community" see footnote 12, p. 125, this ms.

²¹"A long time ago", for example, might mean one decade ago, possibly two, or even longer. It is a convenient phrase used by several of the author's Koasati informants when the exact date was unknown.

²²The author has been fortunate in that the investigators who preceded him to the present-day community were excellent recorders and observers. The works of John R. Swanton have already been cited in the text. These have been particularly helpful. The author is likewise indebted to Lyda Averill Taylor, who was the first investigator to undertake the task of describing and analyzing the Koasati culture. Her field work, performed in the summers of 1936-1937, and described by her in an unpublished text, forms the basis largely for the present chapter.

in mind as the construct of the Koasati culture for the period 1800-1834 unfolds.

The Koasati Sites

Following the pattern established in the Creek Confederacy, the Koasati continued to be town dwellers. Two prime qualifications were deemed necessary by the Koasati for a town site:

1. the site was to be one in which the soils and climate were conducive to the raising of maize, peas, and beans, as well as additional supplementary crops.

2. the site must be located on a river navigable for canoes.

Throughout the period under discussion (1800-1834), whether on the Red, Sabine, Trinity, or Calcasieu rivers these prime considerations were followed.²³

Whether or not the Koasati set up at these sites a town square is not known for certain. No mention is made of a town square in the letters of the Indian agents to their superiors in Washington;²⁴ there is no mention of a Koasati town square in Stiggins or Sibley; the town square is not mentioned by Taylor's informants. However, the possibility of its existence remains.

²³See p. 12, this ms.

²⁴A careful reading of the letters of Jehell Brooks (agent of the Caddo Indian Agency) to the Secretary of War, reveals no mention of a town square.

The Koasati who abandoned the Alabama River for Oklahoma during the Creek removal set up a town square in their new home,²⁵ and at Indian Village in Louisiana the complement to the town square - the shamkey yard is known to have existed. It was called itbitka by the Koasati, or the "big ground", and was used primarily for dancing and for games such as the ball play.²⁶

The Homes

Whether or not the town square did or did not exist it seems clear that the Koasati did not assemble their individual homes according to the old Creek pattern.²⁷ At Indian Village, for example, the homes were dispersed among the trees.²⁸

When asked to give a detailed account of the early Koasati homes, Sissy Abbey rendered the following account:

There are two types of habitations, one a permanent house, the other nothing more than a shelter. The shelter consists of three parallel beams or forked posts, the side ones being about five or six feet high the center one a little higher. Cross

²⁵John R. Swanton, Forty-Second Annual Report, Bur. Amer. Ethnol., 1924-1925, p. 217.

²⁶Informant: Sissy Abbey, as told to Lyda Averill Taylor, and taken from the latter's miscellaneous notes. The notes will hereafter be quoted as Notes.

²⁷See p. 24, this ms.

²⁸Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

poles, placed over these beams, are tied with thongs of the bark. It is roofed with deer skin and the sides are left open. The whole structure, though not more than twelve feet square, is divided into two sections, a platform about one and one-half feet high which is used for storing is built in one section. The people sleep in the other section on deer skins spread on the ground around the fire. During the rainy weather, a trench is dug around the outside of the house to prevent the water from running in.

The more permanent house, is made of the bark of yellow pine. Four beams are placed in forked posts to form a rectangle. Short posts are placed in holes in the shorter end beams and connected by a long ridge pole. The roof and sides of the house are covered with bark which is sewn into large sheets with strips of tree bark. The house is divided into two rooms, one for sleeping, the other for cooking, but any overflow sleeps in the kitchen. A wattle chimney is built in the kitchen though this may be suspected of being a recent innovation.

A built in bed is made on a foundation of four forked posts. It is covered with bear hide and a quilt of buffalo skin is used as a covering.

The store house is made of logs with the interstices filled with clay.²⁹

²⁹From the unpublished account of the Koasati by Lyda Averill Taylor, pp. 9-10, now in the author's possession. Informant: Sissy Abbey. The account will hereafter be quoted as Account.

The description bears no date, although it probably constitutes a good picture of the Indian home during the period of the migrations. The resemblances to the home built by the Creeks are marked.³⁰ The two types of habitations are suggestive of the Creek summer and winter dwellings.³¹ Elaborate decoration, a characteristic of the Creek home, was probably passing from the scene. It is nowhere mentioned by Taylor's informants.³²

Social Organization

The strong social organization of the Koasati, featuring the family, the clan, the phratry, the clan and town moieties, common to the Creek tribes of 1750,³³ all but disintegrated during the period of the migrations. Concepts such as the phratry and the town and clan moieties are not remembered in the present-day community by even the eldest members of the tribe. The concept of the clan is fast passing from the scene.

³⁰For a description of the houses of the Southeastern Indians in 1750 see pp. 24-27, this ms.

³¹For Adair's description of the earlier summer and winter dwellings see pp. 25-26, this ms.

³²In Oklahoma where the town square was retained the Koasati continued to decorate the micco's cabin. Carvings of the four posts were made to represent the garfish. See Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 243.

³³See pp. 28-33, this ms.

The breakdown of the clan system can be attributed to the coming of the white man and to the effects of the migrations upon the Indian. Intermarriage between Indian women and the English and French traders was not uncommon.³⁴ A case of a Koasati male marrying a white woman is also reported.³⁵ Since marriage with the whites was generally frowned upon, it is conceivable that the white participant might find it difficult to procure for himself (or herself), a place in a particular clan. He or she could not join their marriage partner's clan since exogamy was the rule.³⁶

The migrations served to further the breakdown. Moving in small bands -- often as few as twenty families at one time³⁷ in company of persons from different tribes,³⁸ the Koasati settled not in a mother town as on the Alabama River, but in a number of town sites scattered through southeastern Texas and southwestern Louisiana.³⁹ The early migrants were often malcontents who did not stop to think about clan affiliations before

³⁴See footnote 26, p. 30, this ms.

³⁵The grandfather of Susie Williams, Koasati Williams, was the son of an Indian man and white woman. Susie says, "Everyone was jealous because his father had married a white woman. But the white woman became an Indian and prepared hides." From Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

³⁶See p. 29, this ms.

³⁷See p. 72, this ms.

³⁸See pp. 72-73, this ms.

³⁹See pp. 9-13, this ms.

moving.⁴⁰ The new associations made during the migrations produced new ties. As a social force the clan came to lose much ground.

Swanton records the names of ten clans found among the Koasati and the numbers within each:⁴¹

<u>Clan</u>	<u>Numbers</u>
Wildcat	20
Beaver	18
Turkey	19
Panther	4
Wind	2
Bear	1
Salt	2
Deer	1
Wolf	
Alligator	

Jeff Abbey (1857-1951), a chief of the present-day Koasati well versed in the tribal past, could recall the names of twelve clans and their Koasati equivalents:⁴²

<u>Clan</u>	<u>Koasati Equivalent</u>
Turkey	feto
Deer	heco
Wildcat	kowakase
Salt	hape
Fish	lalo
Alligator	albata
Tiger	kowe
Bear	neta
Wolf	waso
Wind	faple
Beaver	noko
Daddy-longlegs	takcailha

⁴⁰See pp. 72-73, this ms.

⁴¹Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 150.

⁴²Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 18.

The lists are similar. The Tiger clan in Jeff Abbey's list may be substituted for Swanton's Panther clan.⁴³ The Daddy-long-legs clan, common among the Alabama with whom the Koasati were closely associated on their migrations, may have been borrowed from them. The problem of the Fish clan is more difficult. A Fish clan was conspicuously absent among the Upper Creek tribes;⁴⁴ it was not common among the Lower Creeks.⁴⁵ However, it must be remembered that the garfish was totemic to the Koasati;⁴⁶ a garfish or Fish clan may well have existed.

The breakdown of the clan system strengthened the role of the family in Koasati life. The family took over many of the clan functions. It provided protection for its members, provided in part for the early education of the youngsters, and gave sustenance to the youth until they were of marriageable age. The Koasati tribesman came to owe the family his greatest allegiance.

⁴³In the Hitchiti division of the Muskogean linguistic stock panther is kowali; in Alabama it is koe ayeksa. The similarity to the Koasati tiger, kowe, is obvious. See Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 116.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 123-125.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 69.

Fish clans were found among the Yuchi and the Chiaha; the Kasihta may also have had a Fish clan.

⁴⁶See p. 69, this ms.

The classificatory relationship system was retained. It is recorded for self-male and self-female by Swanton.⁴⁷

Political Organisation

The Koasati retained the chieftainship during the migrations, although the reasons for the chief's selection and the nature of his functions had changed considerably since the Creek period.⁴⁸

The village is under the leadership of a chief or miko who is chosen by a committee of medicine men and wise men. He must be a medicine man and is chosen for his wisdom and because he can make good medicine. Since shamens usually teach their sons how to cure, the son of a chief is chosen to take his father's place at the latter's death if he has shown himself worthy of the position.⁴⁹

It will be remembered that no inkling of hereditary chieftainship was known among the Creeks.⁵⁰

Swanton states that the Koasati chief must be a member of the Raccoon clan.⁵¹ Jeff Abbey suggests that a chief could be

⁴⁷Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., pp. 89-90.

For changes in the relationship system since Swanton's investigation see p. 143.

⁴⁸For a discussion of the Creek chieftainship see pp. 34-35, this ms.

⁴⁹Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 19.

⁵⁰See p. 34, this ms.

⁵¹The remark is worthy of attention since no Raccoon clan is reported for the Koasati of Louisiana (see p. 82.). He refers here to the Koasati of Oklahoma. See Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 192.

selected from any clan.⁵²

The Koasati also retained the war chief who was known as the inkapitani.⁵³ The micco decided whether or not the Koasati would take part in a struggle; he never accompanied the warriors into battle.⁵⁴ Waging the war was the chief concern of the inkapitani.⁵⁵ However, this may have been true only during the early migrations. There is evidence that the inkapitani became an arbiter of justice during the later migration period and a policeman for the Koasati town.⁵⁶ If members of the tribe were engaged in a fight it was up to him to break it up.⁵⁷

Changes had taken place in the chieftainship during Creek times;⁵⁸ further changes could be expected in view of the experiences participated in by the Indians during their migrations.

⁵²Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 19.

⁵³Ibid., p. 19.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 17.

⁵⁵Idem.

⁵⁶Taylor, Notes, op. cit. Informant: Jeff Abbey

⁵⁷Idem.

⁵⁸See p. 35, this ms.

The services of the skilled orator, the "beloved man" of the Creeks (albeit he was an excellent administrator), were not in great demand in the period of the later migrations. In all probability the micco, assisted by the inkapitani, had led the earlier migrations. When epidemics broke out in the Koasati towns,⁵⁹ however, there was need for the capable medicine man. Thus the micco and inkapitani were ultimately superseded by the shaman, the man who could cure the sick and predict the future.⁶⁰

Religion

When Reverend Paul Leeds, their present pastor, came upon the Koasati in 1893 he observed:

Their only religion was a vague and unproductive superstition, or fear, - hardly reverence, - for the unknown spirit, called by them, Mink-co chitto, the "Great Chief," or "Aba Chacoli", "He who resides above", ... Idleness, ... aimlessness and poverty marked their daily life, indicating no shadow of the knowledge of God, or His saving grace.⁶¹

Mink-co chitto, the Great Chief, bears a marked resemblance to the Master of Life of the Creek Confederacy. It is likely that he is one and the same being.

⁵⁹See p. 13, this ms.

⁶⁰The shaman is discussed in detail on pp. 97-102, this ms.

⁶¹From Reverend Paul Leeds' unpublished account of the Koasati, a copy of which is in the author's possession. The account will hereafter be quoted as Account.

Like their forebears, too, the Koasati worshipped earth spirits.

There are water spirits, but no one can see them. Trees have souls and are believed to talk to each other. The tops of thick trees are the homes of the tree spirits and any tree trunk that is skinned shows the home of one of these spirits, because the marks are from the spirits climbing up and down.⁶²

In spite of the difficulties encountered during the migrations, or perhaps because of them, the Koasati continued to cling to the Creek religious system. Missionary efforts during the migration period went on unabated however. Throughout the Southeast missionaries were attempting to convert the Indians to Christianity. Leeds' statement on their activities is worth quoting in full:

In 1544, a hundred years before John Elliot began work among the Indians near Boston, or Thomas Mayhew on Martha's Vineyard, we find the Spanish Franciscan fathers coming to the Texas Indians. From then on, intermittently, for a hundred and fifty years, the devoted Catholic missionaries labored along the coast from Texas to Florida, but apparently never went far enough north to reach the Koasatis.⁶³ By 1699 the French had settled in Louisiana and their priests attempted work among the tribes then here, the

⁶²Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 36.

⁶³For a refutation of this view see p. 7, this ms.

Tensas, Natchez, Houmas, and others, among whom they labored with small success, until Spain came into possession of Louisiana, and in 1764, all the Jesuits were banished by a royal decree. But the Koasatis had not yet reached this section, so were not affected by this missionary effort. Half a century later, in 1817, the Congregational Board of Foreign Missions sent Cyrus Kingsbury, and others, to Tennessee, beginning a campaign that bid fair to evangelize all the tribes to the Gulf of Mexico. During the next fifteen years splendid work was done by the men of the Board who carried the work down into the northern part of Mississippi and Georgia, ministering to several tribes, including the Creeks, among whom very likely were some Koasatis who afterwards were carried into Indian Territory. But the present group had moved here twenty years before Kingsbury came to Tennessee, so were not reached. In 1831, when the government began deporting the tribes over to their new home, two of our devoted missionaries, Mr. Worcester and Dr. Butler, were thrown into prison for fifteen months for refusing to stop working with the Red Men. Thus were their plans thwarted and fifteen years of devoted labor and all their mission property, valued at sixty thousand dollars, rendered useless and unindemnified. After this discouraging end to their efforts in this section our American Board missionaries followed their Indians West into Arkansas, Indian Territory and Northward, far away from the Calcasieu River of Louisiana and again this benighted group failed of hearing the gospel of free salvation.⁶⁴

The Koasati continued in the early days of the community to take part in the old Creek ceremonials, to participate in

⁶⁴Paul Leeds, A Long Trail to Christ, or How the Koasati Indians were First Evangelized, pp. 1-2. The short, unpublished paper will hereafter be quoted as Long Trail.

Creek songs and music as well as in dancing, and continued to pay heed to old Creek medical practices.⁶⁵

The new fire rite of the old Busk ceremony makes its appearance here, though not in connection with the green corn dance. Once a year everyone puts out his old fire. The Inkapitani makes a new fire with two sticks which are kept for this particular purpose. One stick is rolled back and forth in the hands in a hole in the other stick. As soon as the fire is lighted, everyone takes a bit of the new fire home. Each man has a piece of kindling ready, lights it with the new fire and runs home, holding the fire down toward the ground.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, missionary efforts were not abandoned. Toward the end of the period under discussion Koasati tribesmen visiting Lake Charles, Louisiana came under the influence of Sam Reed, a Christian missionary.⁶⁷ Several of the Koasati assembled at Reed's church, although many expressed a desire not to go.⁶⁸ Those who did were fed by Reed at his expense and were in several instances given English names by him to replace their Indian names.⁶⁹ Reed's work was continued by his son.⁷⁰

⁶⁵See pp. 119-121, for an account of Koasati music and dancing during the migration period. For the medical practices see pp. 97-102.

⁶⁶Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 40.

⁶⁷Taylor, Notes, op. cit. Informant: Susie Williams. Reed's denomination is not recorded.

⁶⁸Idem.

⁶⁹Idem.

⁷⁰Idem.

Cosmography

The Koasati believed that

All things were made at the same time. The earth, sun, moon - all things - got ripe and were left to man. The creatures having assembled, any who liked a certain month took it and ran off. They pursued but did not catch him. He threw it down on the ground as he ran, and it started a new moon. If a variety of bird wanted a month, when it was put down, he took it and ran off with it. When the months were all divided up, they were left to the various creatures. When the Horse was brought forth he said he would have grass to eat and they left it to him. Just so the bear said he would eat acorns to get fat and they were left to him. The Birds said they wanted to eat insects which come out of the ground when it is hot and they took them. What ever month one made a gobbling noise for he took. The Horse said, "I will pull heavy things for people." The Cow said, "I am going to raise children for people." And the summer was made. Winter, spring, and summer were made together. Winter said, "Man is going to roast his leg around me."⁷¹ When it was summer the Humming Bird said, "I will stay about and kiss the flowers." When summer was too hot and it was not good to work, the luminaries changed places, the sun and moon. The sun turned into the moon.⁷²

The Koasati read the four seasons in terms of the horns of the deer. In the first season the deer was without horns;

⁷¹The expression means that in winter people keep close to the fires. See John R. Swanton, Myths and the tales of the southeastern Indians. Bur. of Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 88. Washington, 1929., p. 166.

The work contains 65 Koasati tales collected by Swanton between 1908 and 1914.

⁷²Idem.

the second season was marked by the sprouting of horns; in the third season they had reached their maximum growth and strength; during the fourth season the horns fell out and the cycle was renewed.⁷³

In Creek times the year had been divided into four seasons out of regard for the sacred number four. This may have been due to the fact that summer and winter were cut into two seasons each, for the Indians recognized a distinct summer and winter and later divided their months into a winter and summer series.⁷⁴

It was the Kossati belief that the sky (aba) was a large round dome that came down to meet the flat earth on all sides.⁷⁵ At its apex was the sun (hacit) which appeared in the heavens new and rejuvenated each day. The moon (nitli hacit) followed the course of the sun. Spots appeared on the moon.

The niece of the moon was sleeping one night and the moon came to her and tried to make love to her. She put some soot on his cheek to find out who it was that had come. The next morning she asked her children to find out who had a spot of soot on

⁷³Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 32. Informant: Jake Robinson.

⁷⁴Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 401.

⁷⁵Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 31.

his cheek. The children told her it was the moon. That is how the moon got spots on it.⁷⁶

The new moon was considered a rebirth of the old one. When it appeared the tribesmen were able to ask it for favors. These would invariably be granted.

The Koasati gave life to the elements and phenomena in nature.⁷⁷ Thunder (winnika) was a person, not ordinary, but cruel and barbaric, who made noise by sticking on trees. Lightning was caused by a lost orphan child, who carried a light to show other lost children the way. The wind was a dual person. A prophet who had seen it, told the people that it was both man and woman. Stars were people.

Swanton bears this out in his story of the Pleiades:

The Cluster-stars liked to travel about and dance. They were lazy people who wanted to travel about all of the time. When the planting season arrived they planted and cultivated only pole beans. They ate them, but when it began to get hot they disappeared. They are the Cluster-stars.⁷⁸

The planets and very bright stars were old people, the dinner ones young people.⁷⁹ The Big Dipper the Koasati called hooili

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 31.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 31-32.

⁷⁸Swanton, Tales, op. cit., p. 166.

⁷⁹Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 32. The paragraph is based upon Taylor's observations.

stofapka (cup of stars). The Milky Way was hocil lokole (many stars). The tribesmen feared the rainbow which was supposed to be a poisonous snake which appeared before the rain and was responsible for putting a stop to it.⁸⁰

The Life Cycle

Birth

Child bearing was looked upon as a blessing. Parents expressed no desire for a particular sex. A woman who was barren was looked down upon and would take medicine prepared from tree roots, particularly the lobono (black gum), to help her in procreation.⁸¹ The failure to bear a child was a logical reason for divorce.⁸²

The child bearer was instructed by her mother on child bearing when the first youngster was expected. The expectant mother walked out into the woods alone, kneeled down, her buttocks resting on her heels, to deliver the baby. The umbilical cord was cut with a knife or bitten off. It was not saved.⁸³

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 32. Informant: Susie Williams.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 20.

⁸²Ibid., p. 24.

⁸³Ibid., p. 20.

Several taboos were associated with the period of pregnancy. The expectant mother was not permitted to attend a funeral for fear of viewing the dead person's body; it was believed that the new born if so doing would resemble a corpse. The Koasati were horrified at the thought of having twins.⁸⁴ The expectant mother, therefore, ate no eggs during the period. These were said to be responsible for twins.⁸⁵ After the arrival of the baby, mother and father were to practice continence for a four month period.⁸⁶

At the age of four months the Koasati father sheared the hair of either his son or daughter.⁸⁷ On the given day it was customary to hold a hunt before sunrise. In the case of a boy a bow and arrow were made especially for the occasion; the boy then could expect to spend his future as a hunter. A father might have presented his son with a hoe hoping that his son would turn to tillage for his livelihood. A girl was presented with sewing items. After the hair was shorn a big breakfast was held in honor of the youngster celebrating.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 21.

⁸⁶Idem.

⁸⁷Whether or not this ceremony dates back to the period of the migrations is not clear. It was not practiced apparently by the Creeks, but is very much a part of Koasati life in the present-day community. The ceremony was described to the author by Bel Abbey.

Koasati children were weaned at about age three, at which time an Indian name was bestowed upon them.⁸⁸ The name of an ancestor of some prominence was often selected.

Education of the children was guided by the maternal grandfather or in his absence by the maternal uncle.⁸⁹ The roles of the parents and the inkapitani, however, were not to be minimized.

The parents taught the children to behave themselves. The chief called the boys together and asked them to be good. If he found a child misbehaving, he had him brought naked in front of everyone and whipped. The whip was made of a stick splint so that it pinched when it hit. After the child was punished, the parents took the child and bathed him in warm water. Children are also punished like that for not obeying their parents. If children misbehave the parents can't get angry at those who punish them. The inkapitani took charge of punishing them and the parents couldn't say a word against the punishment.

As soon as the children are big enough to hold a hoe, they are given one and put in the field to work. Those who were very lazy cried not to work.

Girls have to get the corn and prepare it. They had to grind it in the mortar and if one shirked her duty, the others hit her with the pestle.

The inkapitani took charge of making the children work. The boys were whipped but not the girls. Their punishment was to have their legs scratched with a paste made of wolf's teeth.

⁸⁸Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 21.

⁸⁹Idem.

Boys have to be good hunters, so the inkapitani gave each boy a bow and arrow to practice with. They shot at birds and when the inkapitani wasn't looking they shot at each other. They also killed squirrels and had to bring the kill to the chief. As they grew up they became good hunters and advanced to killing deer which they brought to the chief.

Men killed the deer and the women cooked the meat. When little boys killed birds and brought them to the chief, they got little girls to cook them. They cooked them in a pot over the fire. After being trained in hunting, they had to learn to fish and used crawfish for bait. They all went to the bayou and lined up. The fish was also brought to the chief and cooked by the little girls.⁹⁰

Mothers taught their daughters to weave, to tan skins, to make the twilled-plaited basket; the maternal uncle or the father of the boy taught him to hunt, fish, or swim. Koasati youth were encouraged to swim in the neighboring river or bayou each day; swimming, it was thought, kept the body healthy and strong.

Marriage

It was expected of the Koasati girl that she remain chaste prior to marriage.

Girls were not supposed to have children before they were married. When it did happen, the chief told the girl, 'You have been told not to do that, now you can go your own way.' No one paid any attention to her and she was left alone.⁹¹

⁹⁰Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 21-22.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 23. Informant: Susie Williams

It was common Komsati practice for both boys and girls to lure their prospective mates with love medicine.

At sundown, they take a small bowl filled with water, cover it with a handkerchief and put it somewhere outside of the house. At midnight, they say a prayer over the bowl, repeating the name of the person they wish to make love them. In the morning they wash their faces in this water, then go to the house of the person and talk to them.⁹²

Permission to marry a young lady was granted the suitor by the girl's parents with the consent of her maternal uncle. The chief was also informed of the new arrangement. Girls often married when they were fifteen years old; boys were often twenty when they married.⁹³

Sexual relations between an unwed couple frequently resulted in marriage. Adultery was severely punished. A man and his mistress were publicly whipped; the ears of the guilty were cut off. Eloping was also looked upon with disfavor. Upon their return the elopers were publicly whipped. A divorce was easy to obtain. A man might leave his spouse because of incompatibility, because she failed to fulfill her household obligations, or because she could bear no children. A wife could simply send her husband away. In either case the children of the divorced couple remained with the mother.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 23-24.

⁹³This paragraph and the paragraph which follows are based upon Taylor, Notes, op. cit. Informants: Susie Williams and Sissy Abbey.

Death and Burial

Taylor describes the practices associated with death and burial:

When a person dies, the news is spread from family to family around the village. The family of the deceased cover their heads and cry while some other family prepares the body for burial. The corpse, dressed in its everyday dress is wrapped in deerskin with the knees drawn up to the chin.⁹⁴ If it is a child who has died, a black stripe is painted on each cheek with soot. The baby is carried to the burial ground, slung from a pole supported by two ropes. The grave is dug in the ground and the sides are lined with posts of wood. The body is lowered, head facing the west, the supporting ropes cut and a covering of wood is placed over the top. All personal possessions are placed with the body. Food is also placed in the grave so that the soul will have something to eat. For four evenings, just at sundown some members of the family fires a gun over the grave, then lights a fire.

Since there are no special burial grounds, they dig the grave anywhere in the woods. They have no knowledge of disintering the body for second burial, nor do they abandon the house in which a person has died.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Note that the position of the body was in keeping with Creek practice. See pp. 43-44, this ms.

⁹⁵Taylor, Account, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

The observation made here is in reference to Creek practice. See p. 44, this ms.

Afterlife

Heaven was above and toward the east.⁹⁶ The first night when the gun was fired over the grave, the soul sat up. The following night it stood up. On the third night it gathered its belongings in preparation for its departure on the fourth night. If the head had been properly placed to the west at burial, the soul would be facing the right path when it started on its journey. Persons went to heaven in the same condition in which they died; a young man remained young, an old man remained old.⁹⁷

It was not easy for a person who had been bad to get to heaven. An eagle hovered over the body barring passage. A knife, often interred with the body, was meant to be used on the eagle.⁹⁸

The Medicine Man

Of special importance to the Koasati was the medicine man, the man or woman responsible for curing the illnesses of the tribesmen.⁹⁹

⁹⁶Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 26.

The following paragraph is based upon Taylor.

⁹⁷A departure from Creek practice is to be noted here. The Creeks left the earth for a new state of existence and were rewarded in the new life in accordance with the good or evil deeds they had performed. See p. 44, this ms.

⁹⁸Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 26.

⁹⁹For other functions of the medicine man see p. 101, this ms.

A man or woman may become a medicine man by first drinking passa¹⁰⁰ which a shaman prepares for him. Then he goes home and fasts for four days. On the fourth evening, he goes to the river, jumps in four times, and, on coming out, looks up until he sees the first star. He returns home to eat a little food without any salt. When this has been completed, one of the doctors teaches him medicine. This same ceremony is used to become a fortune teller.¹⁰¹

Jeff Abbey suggested that a more elaborate ceremony prepared for men only and known as the ayekace was practiced earlier.

It is performed in the summer before going to war and those wishing to become doctors remain after the ceremony to learn cures from the chief. The men go out into the woods with the chief and build a small square leaf shelter in which the chief makes passa. When the medicine has been prepared, they put hot stones in the shelter and pour water on them. As soon as the place is full of steam, the men go in and drink the medicine. For four days, the men eat no food, but only drink the emetic. The ceremony concluded, the men who are not remaining, go home and, on the way, touch a female dog. The dog is supposed to die because the power of the medicine is so great. No one may

¹⁰⁰Passa, the Black Drink, is prepared in a large pot by boiling the leaves of Ilex cassine in water. Passa was taken for one of three purposes: to be a medicine man, a prophet, or for protection from being injured in a war. See Taylor, op. cit., p. 28.

Passa is the "buttonsnake-root" of the whites, sometimes called "bear grass". Its scientific name is Eryngium yuccaefolium. See Swanton, op. cit., p. 655.

¹⁰¹Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 27. Informant: Jake Robinson.

eat until he sees the first star at the end of the four days. It is customary for every man to go through this ceremony every year for four years, though it is not compulsory.

The pupils remain out in the woods while the chief teaches them how to cure and all the sacred words that go with various medicines.

All medicine men are general practitioners. The chief, however, is the dean of the medicine men and is also considered the best teacher.¹⁰²

Specific ailments were caused by the following:

Thunder causes paralysis; fire which has been burning in the woods a long time, such as a stump smoldering, causes fever; a person drinking water from a bayou where a lizard has been swimming gets pneumonia; a turtle which stays in the pine woods also causes pneumonia, but of a more serious variety; a person drinking water in which a snake has been gets a stomach ache; the sun gives a headache to anyone who doesn't get up before sunrise; a warrior leaving the blood stains from an enemy on his shirt gets pains all over; a person who has been digging a grave and doesn't wash the grave dirt off carefully will also get pains all over and will become sleepy and lazy; a person who has been digging a grave and puts his trousers on out there gets a pain between the shoulder blades; grave dirt also causes a pain in the leg.¹⁰³

The Koasati believed that one of their own number could make a fellow tribesman ill.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 27-28. Informant: Jeff Abbey.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 23-29. Informants: Jackson Langley, Mrs. Langley, Jeff Abbey, Susie Williams, and Sissy Abbey.

He gets a piece of hair or clothing of the victim, blows on it then goes to the victim's house. While there, he tries to place it on the part of the person which he wishes to make sick. If the person dies as a result, he is killed by the family of the deceased, but if the victim finally gets well, there is no punishment.¹⁰⁴

Medicine men discovered the illis of a patient by personal observation or by dream interpretation.¹⁰⁵ Cures were effected by the chanting of prayers, blood letting, the sucking of blood, and by the application to the wound or the drinking of boiled herbs, roots, tree bark, or leaves.

Called into the patient's home to treat a snake bite, the medicine man would utter the following prayer which he repeated four times:

louni - louni
hokoyne - hokoyne
cowoh - cowoh¹⁰⁶

As he recited the medicine man used a pin to scratch a ring around the bite. The boiled roots of the osh-lea-po¹⁰⁷ were then applied and allowed to sink into the wound. When patients were in considerable pain the venomous spot was sucked in order to pre-

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁰⁵Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

¹⁰⁶The chant appears in Taylor's miscellaneous notes.

¹⁰⁷The name was supplied by Susie Williams but its English equivalent is not known.

vent blood poisoning.¹⁰⁸

Other external wounds were treated in similar fashion, although each had its own prayer and its own specific remedy.

Headaches were treated by making an incision in the head at the temple.¹⁰⁹

The drinking of specific types of boiled root, herb, bark or leaf juice was the prescribed treatment for internal and contagious diseases. Ci sha,¹¹⁰ a bark boiled in water, was used for pain in the stomach; for measles the ce-fe-hak-ses root was boiled and drunk; for whooping cough a-til-ill-ho-checkso is-nit-to, "little leaves growing on trees", were used.

Similar remedies were employed to cure bad tempers, to act as love potions, to restore broken homes.¹¹¹

A practice claimed to be much earlier was suggested by Susie Williams. The medicine man had a tree-leaf shelter constructed in the woods. The diseased were sent there for a four-

¹⁰⁸Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 30. Informant: Susie Williams.

¹⁰⁹Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

¹¹⁰The names which follow were supplied by Mrs. Jackson Langley. English equivalents are not known.

¹¹¹Taylor, Notes, op. cit. Informant: Mrs. Jackson Langley.

day period during which they fasted and drank passa, the Black Drink, which was a strong emetic. An old woman stood by the hut to act as nurse. Her duty was to sip the medicine before passing it on to the sick.¹¹²

The Koasati believed that all the cures were handed down to them by Aba Chacoli, who taught the Indians the names of the plants, the specific treatment to be used for each disease, and the sacred words to utter.¹¹³ Koasati medicine men passed their knowledge on. Susie Williams learned the prayers from her mother. She had to pay for the knowledge. This was common practice.

The Economy

The Koasati economy during the migration period bore marked resemblances to the Creek economy.¹¹⁴ The tribesmen continued to farm, to hunt, to fish.

Hunted were the deer and bear, the rabbit, squirrel, and raccoon. Favorite delicacies were birds, particularly the wild turkey. Two methods of attack were employed by the Koasati. An individual attacked his prey by himself or a group was organized to pursue the hoped-for kill. When an animal was killed, it was

¹¹²Taylor, Account, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹⁴The discussion of the economy is based upon Taylor, Notes, op. cit. Chief informant: Jeff Abbey.

returned to a pre-determined camp site. The bear was sought in trees where he was hibernating. When sighted a warrior pitched a lighted brand into the tree forcing the bear to the ground.¹¹⁵ Hunters stationed below made the kill. The bear was never hunted by an individual. Dogs were used to track the animals. When hunting deer, a decoy, a deer's head stuffed with moss held over the hunter's head was employed. The Koasati used no mechanical deer or bird calling devices. They whistled to lure birds.

For killing big game the Koasati employed the bow and arrow. The bow was manufactured from a stave of hickory about five feet in length.¹¹⁶ Its greatest width was attained at the center; it tapered at both ends where the bow string of twisted deer hide was fastened. No sinew backing was used. The arrow was made of wood; the arrow head was made of cane.¹¹⁷ For feathering two turkey feathers, with ribs shaved off, were used.¹¹⁸ In releasing the

¹¹⁵See pp. 49-50, this ms. for Adair's account of bear hunting. The comparison to the Koasati method is striking.

¹¹⁶The description of the bow is based upon Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 13.

¹¹⁷Koasati informants make no mention of shell, bone, or metal arrow heads although these were employed by the Creeks. See p. 50, this ms.

¹¹⁸Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 13.

arrow the Koasati employed the primary release.¹¹⁹ It must also be remembered that the gun of the white man known since the days of the Creeks was also used for the kill.

The weapon employed for killing small game and birds was the cane blow gun hollowed out of a cane five to eight feet in length.¹²⁰ Darts employed were made from thin cane slivers the ends of which were wrapped in cotton. The Koasati were adept in its use. Accuracy was excellent up to a distance of forty feet.¹²¹

The Koasati believed that animals were infinitely wise and cunning. In order to be caught they must be lured into the hunters presence. Every hunter obtained a "medicine" which he rubbed into his palms.¹²² He then raised his hands, palms outward. The animal would soon draw near.

Common Creek methods of catching fish such as the hand net,

¹¹⁹In the primary release the nock is held between the thumb and the first joint of the forefinger. See Frederick W. Hodge, Handbook of American Indians north of Mexico, Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 30, 2 vols., 1905, Vol. I., p. 98.

¹²⁰The canes were hollowed out by applying a heated wire to the cane pith. Informant: Deo Langley in a conversation with the author. Dr. John M. Goggin of the Department of Anthropology, University of Florida, in a conversation with the author, reports the same practice for the Choctaw.

¹²¹Based upon a query made by the author to Kimmy Williams, a present-day tribesman.

¹²²Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

the fire lure, gunfire, dam building, and the hook and line were not employed by the Koasati.¹²³ They did, however, use the bow and arrow, fish poisoning, and the cane harpoon.¹²⁴ Fish poisoning was the favorite method. The streams were littered with the mashed leaves of the colkafo.¹²⁵ When stunned the fish wavered on the surface of the water and were collected by hand. The bows and arrows used were of the same construction as those used in hunting.

Both fish and animal meat were roasted before eating.¹²⁶ Four forked sticks were placed in the ground. These were joined by sticks laid crosswise between the forks. Strips of meat were hung from the framework. A fire was built beneath the framework and the meat roasted.

Agriculture, too, continued to hold an important place in

¹²³Based upon the fact that these methods were mentioned neither by Taylor's informants nor by the informants of the author.

¹²⁴Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 5.

¹²⁵Idem.

Unfortunately the English equivalent was not known to the Indians, and Taylor was unable to identify it. Colkafo meant nothing to Bel Abbey, Kimmy Williams, and Enoy Abbott of the present-day community when the author made his queries about same.

¹²⁶Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 3.

the Koasati economy.¹²⁷ An informant suggested to Taylor the following:

When it was time to plant, the chief told all the people, 'It is time to plant corn'. Then all the people gathered and helped each other with their planting. This was done until everyones planting had been done. The chief told them not to be afraid of dry land, but to go ahead and plant. But when you plant corn, make the hills much higher, don't be afraid of dry weather. At harvest time, they all gathered together and brought all the harvest to the chief. He distributed it to all the families who took it home and put it in their barns.¹²⁸

Planting and harvesting then were communal activities.¹²⁹

Caring for the crop during the growing period, however, was the responsibility of the individual family.¹³⁰

Men and women both participated in the agricultural activities. The men cleared the fields and assisted the women at the harvest; the women wielded the metal hoe, a contribution of the white man, during the planting season and she in company of

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 5. See, however, pp. 108-110; this ms.

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 5-6.

¹²⁹This was good Creek practice. See p. 48, this ms.

¹³⁰Family undoubtedly means just that here rather than clan; the early travellers in the Creek country (Swan is a good example) had used the term family for clan since they did not comprehend at the time the intricacies of the clan system.

the children kept the fields free of weeds. One crop was cultivated by the men alone - tobacco.¹³¹ In addition to corn and tobacco, peas and beans were raised.

It was customary, as in Creek times, for the Koasati to have behind their dwellings a small field.¹³² The field was considered the private property of the individual family and was worked by the women and children. A change took place, however, in the location of the behind-the-house garden plots after the Koasati arrival on the Calcasieu. Small gardens were set up in the woods at some distance from the homes.¹³³

Trade, an important factor in the Creek economy,¹³⁴ was completely cut off during the early period of the Koasati migrations. The Indians, having relied after 1763 solely upon the English traders for guns, bullets, powder, razors, needles, metal knives and utensils, woolen goods, ribbon and Stroud cloth, were suddenly cut off from the traders after their departure for the west and were compelled to utilize increasingly the resources of the land

¹³¹Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 6.

¹³²See p. 48, this ms.

¹³³Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

Why this change took place is not clear. In the present-day community the garden is once more located behind the dwelling. See p. 170, this ms.

¹³⁴See p. 53, this ms.

and their own resourcefulness to earn their livelihood. For the Koasati, who for over a century and a half had been in contact with the white traders,¹³⁵ and had come to depend upon them for particular wares, this was a blow of significant proportions.¹³⁶ It may well account, at least in part, for a retrogression in Koasati material culture - particularly in the economic lifeway.

Whereas the Koasati who had lived on the Alabama River were primarily agriculturalists, the Indians of the early migrations were first and foremost hunters, fishers, and gatherers, who supplemented these activities by planting corn, beans, pumpkins, and peas.

The migrations themselves, compelling the Koasati to become temporarily nomadic, were likewise in part responsible for the retrogression in the economic lifeway. Also to be considered are the Indian peoples with whom the Koasati came into contact during the migration period.

Taylor's informants suggest Koasati contacts with the Karankawa of the Texas coast and with the Atakapa of the lower

¹³⁵See p. 5, this ms.

¹³⁶It is well to remember Adair's foresight in this connection. He had warned that the Indians were even in his day no longer able to get on without the traders. See p. 63, this ms.

Sabine and Neches rivers.¹³⁷ Contacts were undoubtedly made with the Akokisa of the lower Trinity River.¹³⁸ It is known that the Koasati had intimate contacts with the Bidai¹³⁹ with whom several intermarriages are reported.¹⁴⁰ It is probable that the Koasati also knew the Patiri and the Hasinai.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

For an excellent sketch-map of the area in question see Andree F. Sjoberg, "The Bidai Indians of Southeastern Texas". Southwestern Journal of Anthropology. Univ. of New Mex. Press. Albuquerque. Vol. VII. No. 4. Winter, 1951. p. 392.

Taylor's informants point out that the Comanche, who are known to have made punitive raids as far south as the Texas coast, were enemies of the Koasati.

See also Albert S. Gatschet, "The Karankawa Indians, The Coast People of Texas." Archaeological and Ethnological Papers of the Peabody Museum. Harvard Univ. Vol. I. no. 2. Cambridge, 1891. p. 41.

¹³⁸Proximity suggests this; the Koasati were intimately connected with the Bidai who were located much farther to the north.

¹³⁹E. L. Blair, Early history of Grimes County. Austin, Texas, 1930. p. 36. Quoted in Sjoberg, op. cit., p. 393.

¹⁴⁰Annie Heloise Abel, ed., A report from Natchitoches in 1807, by Dr. John Sibley. Indian Notes and Monographs, Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, Vol. XXV, 1922. p. 96. Quoted in Sjoberg, op. cit., p. 395.

¹⁴¹See map, Sjoberg, op. cit., p. 392.

While the Bidai had earlier been an agricultural people they subsisted primarily in the 19th century on the products of the hunt.¹⁴² They fished and gathered wild fruits and honey.¹⁴³ Their neighbors, the Atakapan, Karankawan, and Tonkawan tribes also subsisted in the same manner. This low economic level, which had its ramifications upon the cultural development of the tribes as a whole, led Swanton to term the east Texas coast a "cultural sink".¹⁴⁴ It was into this sink that the Koasati moved on their migrations.

The Koasati had appeared in the sink with a culture higher than that of their neighbors. Yet, the migrations, the loss of the advantages derived from trading with the whites, and the contacts with the Indians within the sink, all contributed to a retrogression in Koasati economic life. While resemblances to the Creek economy remain clear it appears that the Koasati depended throughout the early migration period more upon hunting, fishing, and gathering than they did upon agriculture.

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 396.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 397.

¹⁴⁴John R. Swanton, "Southern Contacts of the Indians North of the Gulf of Mexico". In Annaes do XX Congresso Internacional de Americanistas, pp. 53-59, Rio de Janeiro, 1924. p. 54.

The term "sink" is a geological one. Swanton included within the sink the area between the high cultures on the east - as far east as the Caddo - and the high cultures to the west and south - to the Huasteca of Mexico, a distance of 600 miles.

Diet

During the entire migration period the foods procured from the chase were consumed, and berries and fruits, fish, turtles, and turtle's eggs were eaten. Corn continued to be the agricultural staple in the diet.

Corn is prepared in many ways. When green it is scraped off the cob with deer mandible and made into bread or soup. Ripe corn, ground in the mortar, is put through a sieve for making bread or hominy. It is also boiled on the cob, then put away to dry. When nearly dried, the kernels are stored away in gourds. This dried corn is boiled until tender and mixed with bear grease.¹⁴⁵

In addition the Koasati enjoyed eating all varieties of birds, particularly the wild turkey; they consumed, too, the products of their garden plots - pumpkins, peas, and beans.

The leading beverage was tea made from the roots of the sassafras tree.¹⁴⁶

They manufactured flour from the koonti root.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 3.

From the corn a thick corn soup was prepared known to the Koasati as choachka. The corn was pounded fine in the mortar; water was added to it, and the contents boiled. While not particularly tasty, the dish was and is today prized among the Indians.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁴⁷The koonti root, widely used among the tribes of the southeast, is a variety of smilax. See Swanton, 42nd Ann. Rept., op. cit., p. 692.

It is washed, cut into small pieces, pounded in a mortar until finely shredded, water poured over it, strained through a cloth and left to settle. The sediment, dried in the sun, is used as flour. ¹⁴⁸

Koasati dishes were flavored with salt secured by boiling mud to remove the salt content. ¹⁴⁹

An interesting food taboo was observed. The entrails of animals were never eaten, except those of the bear; when eaten, the bear's entrails were consumed first. ¹⁵⁰

The Koasati, in keeping with the Creek tradition, had no fixed eating time. They ate when they were hungry.

Clothing

The women wore a long skirt (hono) which fell to the ankles, and a blouse (holifka) with long sleeves. ¹⁵¹ A silver pin knotted the blouse at the neck. Necklaces of beads were worn. The hair, parted in the middle, was drawn up over the ears and knotted in a bun in the back. Around the rim of the ears holes were pierced and earrings or pieces of wood inserted. ¹⁵² The Indian women loved

¹⁴⁸Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 3-4.

¹⁵¹Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

¹⁵²This custom may be associated with the earliest days of the migrations. No one in the present-day community remembers it.

to go barefoot but wore moccasins of deerskin and shoes which were ankle-high on many occasions. The headdress was a handkerchief put over the head and tied under the chin. It was often red in color and liberally sprinkled with silver ornaments.¹⁵³

The men wore a deerskin shirt which hung to the knees. Trousers, also of deerskin, fell to a point just above the ankle. Leggings were commonly worn.¹⁵⁴ Shoes were similar to those worn by the women. Men pierced their noses and wore there a silver ornament. They also pierced their ears. A red handkerchief, folded to a strip about one and a half inches wide, was worn around the neck.

On particular occasions special clothing was worn. At the dances the women wore red cotton dresses; the men wore red shirts with long sleeves. Brightly colored sashes were worn.¹⁵⁵ Turkey

¹⁵³Such a shawl can be found in the Harrington collection, Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York City. Collection no. 1/3595. A colored slide of the shawl is in the possession of John M. Goggin, Department of Anthropology, University of Florida (slide no. 19), who kindly loaned it to the author.

¹⁵⁴A pair of red flannel leggings with a straight square bottom, fringed by a diamond-shaped design can be found in the Harrington collection, Museum of the American Indian. Also Goggin (slide no. 23).

¹⁵⁵One such sash measures $49\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by 3 and three-eighths inches in width. The resemblances to the Alabama sashes are marked. Harrington collection, Museum of the American Indian, New York City. Also Goggin (slide no. 7).

feathers were included in the headdress. A pouch made of cotton and decorated with beads was hung over each shoulder. The same pouch was ordinarily used for carrying tobacco. Keasati men wore their hair long unlike the Creeks.

Tanning

The preparation of the deerskin, so important in clothing, was an art at which the Indians excelled. Preparing the skin was the work of the women.

The skin, after soaking in water overnight is stretched over a log set in the ground at an angle to be scraped. When it has been gone over thoroughly it is dipped in water in which deer brains have been boiled, then wrung out and stretched. This process is kept up for an hour. The skin is then stretched between two poles stuck in the ground and rubbed with a stick. To give it a yellow color, a fire is built in the ground and two poles arched over it. The skin is thrown over these and the smoke from the smouldering fire finishes the tanning process.¹⁵⁶

Basketry and Pottery

The Keasati women continued to fashion the twilled plaited cane basket.¹⁵⁷ The patterns used varied from over-one under-one to over-six under-three.¹⁵⁸ This constitutes a departure from

¹⁵⁶Taylor, Account, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 11.

For the Creek practice see p. 61, this ms.

¹⁵⁸Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 11.

Creek practice, the Creeks adhering to a four-over four-under made in keeping with the number sacred to them.¹⁵⁹

The cane employed was woven in its natural color or dyed red or black. The bark of the black gum (lobono) was boiled in order to obtain the black dye;¹⁶⁰ sinms bark was boiled to obtain red dye.¹⁶¹

Baskets were used as sieves, trays, and as laundry containers.

Taylor's informants report that sewing was done with an awl and twisted weeds or deerskin twisted properly were used for thread.¹⁶²

The ceramic art disappeared from the Koasati lifeway during the migration period. The process of manufacture was recalled, however, by an informant of Taylor.

They get the clay from gulleys and chop it into small pieces to carry home. It is mixed with water until soft. The first step is to make a flat round disc which serves as the bottom of the pot, then build up the sides with rolls of clay until it is the desired size and shape. The walls are smoothed either with the hands or with shell. Incised designs can be made with turkey feathers while the pot is still wet. It is put in the sun to dry and for further baking is set into the fire.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹See footnote 149, p. 61, this ms.

¹⁶⁰Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁶¹Taylor was unable to identify sinms.

¹⁶²In the absence of the English traders from whom they procured needles and possibly thread, the Indians were forced to return to the use of old methods.

¹⁶³Taylor, Account, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

The Koasati also hand-painted the completed vessels.¹⁶⁴

All objects could not be carried by basket or pot however.

For handling heavier materials deerskin wrappings were used.

For carrying women wrap their bundles in a square piece of skin, knot two diagonal corners and bring the other two diagonal corners over their shoulders to tie in front of them. Men roll their bundles into a cylindrical roll, tie each end with a thong of deer skin and bring the ends of the things over their shoulders to tie in front.¹⁶⁵

Babies were carried in a shawl drawn across the mother's back.¹⁶⁶

Wood and Metal Work

Koasati men made stools and carved spoons of wood; they fashioned ornaments out of silver coins.¹⁶⁷ After the coins were beaten flat with a heavy piece of metal they were decorated. Lines were usually incised into the metal piece with a knife. Pins, bracelets, and rings were made. They were rubbed hard to make them shine.

The Calumet

The mysterious calumet, described so eloquently by Louis Hennepin,¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁶⁶Idem. The practice is also known in the present community. See photograph 1, p. 117, this ms.

¹⁶⁷Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁶⁸See pp. 63-64, this ms.



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Babies were carried in a shawl drawn across the mother's back. (Photograph by Lyda Averill Taylor, 1936).

was abandoned by the Koasati during the migrations.¹⁶⁹ The Indians retain no memory of ever having used the pipe.

Games

The games played by the Koasati during the migrations were those they knew on the Alabama River. They played the chunky game, a dice game, and participated in several varieties of the ball play.¹⁷⁰

The chunky game must have been abandoned during the early migrations for no one in the present-day community could identify it. The dice game, in which the cane contrivances of old were employed, was retained throughout the migration period. The favorite game of the Koasati - the ball play - was also retained.

Two types of ball play were known, one called tayahaetentoleci, the other nanihanamuktoliloi.¹⁷¹ The former was engaged in by both men and women, five men and five women participating as team members on a single side. The object of the game was to strike the cross piece set up horizontally on two poles as the goal in the

¹⁶⁹The calumet may have been dispensed with due to the migrations, since travellers could ill-afford to carry it. That the small pipe was abandoned is a greater mystery in view of the fact that the Koasati were tobacco growers.

¹⁷⁰See pp. 64-67, this ms., for a discussion of the Creek games.

¹⁷¹Taylor, Account, op. cit., p. 37.

The discussion of both ball plays is based upon Taylor, pp. 36-37.

center of the field. One point was scored each time the cross piece was hit. The men wielded two rackets (stoka), one smaller than the other. They could at no time touch the ball with their hands. Women used only their bare hands. Persons were often injured as a result of the complete abandon with which the swing of the rackets was executed.

The second type of ball game was played on a field the size of a modern basketball court. The goals, two sticks set into the ground, were placed at each end of the field. The object of the game was to drive the ball between the opponent's posts. The game was begun at the center line which stretched breadthwise across the field. The ball was thrown up in the center and the players charged for the ball. There were five participants (men only) on each side. Only three from each team were free to move over the entire field. The others acted as goalies and were not permitted over the center line. Rackets were the same as those used in tayehastentoleci. Twenty-four goals were necessary for victory.

Because the clan system and the town and clan moieties had continued to disintegrate during the migrations the ball play was no longer a contest between rival "fires", but a game to be played among friends whenever the time was available.

Dancing and Music

Dancing played an important role in Koasati social life during the migration period. A night of dancing often preceded the ball games.

In the center of a field a fire was started, as the dance leader prepared to sing and beat his drum.¹⁷² A circle formed around the fire. The drum continued to beat as the tribesmen chanted:

ye - ye - ye - ye
 yeye - yeye - yeye - yeye
 wi - ha - wi - ha - wi - ha - wi - ha¹⁷³

The dancing was begun in a very slow tempo which was rapidly increased. When the final syllable was reached the men stopped abruptly and were replaced by the women who repeated the performance. This dance was known to the Indians as the "simple dance". Other favorites were the duck, chicken, rabbit, bob white, buzzard, horned owl, horse, and buffalo dances.

Taylor describes the dances she observed:

Duck dance - this is danced by men and women. Women stand in pairs holding a handkerchief between them in their hands. Facing each pair of women is a pair of men. The drum starts and they do a jumping step, the couples facing each other, the music speeds up and as it does, the women pass under the bridge formed by the arms of the men holding their handkerchiefs and come to face the next couple. They keep going around in this fashion until the leader breaks off the music.

¹⁷²The drum was a cypress knee with a skin stretched over the top. One stick was used for beating the drum. Another instrument which accompanied the dancing was the gourd rattle, filled with small stones. It was carried by the dancers. The Kossati made an end-blown cane flute with six stops but it was not used in the dancing.

¹⁷³Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

Horse dance - in this the women line up on one side, the men on the other. The men go up to the women, each man taking a woman by the hand and lead them around the fire and then back to their places.

The Horned Owl Dance is the only one of their dances which seems to have ceremonial aspect. This dance may not be permitted in the summer, nor may the songs be sung. It is strictly a winter dance. What the significance of this is I was not able to find out. The men form in two lines, walking together. They circle the fire twice and follow the snake dance pattern of wandering back and forth over the ground. They finish by forming a circle around the fire and sit down cross legged with their backs to the fire. Each man has before him a basket of meat. The women walk up, each carrying a basket of bread, and each stops in front of a man and trades baskets with him. They sit facing each other and eat. This performance is done for four nights in succession.¹⁷⁴

An eagle dance was performed by the children.

They line up, their arms outstretched to the side. They bend slightly, raising the right arm and lowering the left wiggling their fingers. Then they move the right down slowly and raise the left. After this has been done four times, they form a circle and run waving their arms up and down in the same manner.¹⁷⁵

Reminders of the Creek ceremony of the busk appear in the dances.

¹⁷⁴Taylor, Account, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

These observations were made in the summers of 1936-1937. Traits obviously borrowed from the white man are to be noted. These may or may not have been as significant during the migration period.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 38-39.

When the corn is ripe every year, they collect it and hold a dance. Before eating the corn, they drink passa and certain special prayers are said while it is being made. There is no special dance for this ceremony, they only perform the simple dance.¹⁷⁶

Apparently the Koasati did not perform during the migration period the ceremony in honor of the new crop of beans, and no longer sanctified the mulberry.¹⁷⁷ The Black Drink was used by the medicine man but was no longer as important as it had been since the military functions of the beverage had largely passed from the scene.

Language

The Koasati tongue remained throughout the migration period the every-day language of the Indians. It was the language first learned by the Koasati youth and the one they spoke throughout their lifetime. Travelling with the Alabama on occasions it is clear that several individual words may have been borrowed from that source. That words may have been borrowed from the Bidai, the Karankawa, and from other neighboring tribes in East Texas is possible. At the same time accretions were probably made during the period from sources other than Indian, although white contact was slight up until the movement to Indian Village. Comparatively isolated, the Koasati language, albeit with minor accretions, was able to survive.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁷⁷See footnote 55, p. 38, this ms.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENT KOASATI COMMUNITY

The Koasati who moved to Indian Village selected their site in the traditional Creek manner.¹ They may have erected on the Calcasieu a town square, for the itbitka or chunky yard, is known to have existed there.² They built permanent dwellings made of the bark of yellow pine and less pretentious shelters for use in summer.³ They hunted the deer and bear in the neighboring woods, fished in the Calcasieu, and planted corn, peas, and beans in the fields near the river. They came into contact with the Chitimacha Indians,⁴ and made more intimate contacts with the whites. They journeyed to Lake Charles to hear the missionary Sam Reed preach the gospel.⁵

¹See p. 75, this ms.

A departure from earlier Creek practice is to be noted here. While a navigable river remained an essential in Koasati settlement, the canoe was no longer employed. Instead, logs three inches in diameter, were lashed together to make rafts. When the canoe passed from the Koasati lifeway is not known. It is significant that Taylor's informants do not mention it.

²See p. 76, this ms.

³See pp. 76-77, this ms.

⁴From the miscellaneous notes of Lyda Averill Taylor, hereafter cited as Notes.

⁵See p. 87, this ms.

and went to Bayou Beaver to purchase coffee.⁶ They were respected by Indian and white man alike.⁷

The peace at Indian Village was not to last however. In 1884, white settlers, taking advantage of the terms of the Homestead Act of 1862, obtained 160-acre homesteads in the area.⁸ The Koasati who did not own the land were forced to abandon it.

At this crucial point in their history the Koasati were fortunate in having a good white friend. James Cole, whose descendants live in Oberlin, Allen Parish, Louisiana today, advised the Indians to become homesteaders and landowners themselves. They could homestead the land on either side of Bayou Blue, fifteen miles east of Indian Village.⁹ Several of the Koasati, August Williams among them, encouraged by Cole, agreed that homesteading the land would assure their possession of it.¹⁰ Homesteads were obtained and the short migration to the east was begun. Less than a decade

⁶Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

Purchase was by barter, deer pelts in exchange for silver coins or metal hoes. The coins were worked by the Indians into ornaments. See p. 116, this ms.

Taylor does not say where Bayou Beaver is located. The name meant nothing to persons interviewed in the present-day community by the author.

⁷The statement of Alphonse Bushnell of Kinder, Louisiana, who knew the Koasati of Indian Village, in a conversation with the author.

⁸See p. 13, this ms.

⁹See p. 13, this ms.

¹⁰The statement of Kinny Williams in a conversation with the author.

later Reverend Leeds could report between 150 and 200 Koasati on Bayou Blue.¹¹

In peopling their newly found home the Koasati abandoned in part the traditional Creek custom of settling on river sites favorable for canoe traffic; Bayou Blue, shallow and clogged with Cypress trees, is barely navigable. The land on either side the bayou was similar, however, to the land from which they had come, and could easily be tilled. The Koasati have occupied the Bayou Blue site since 1884.

Today, in the southeastern corner of Allen Parish, three and one-half miles northwest of the city of Elton, stands the St. Peter's Congregational Church, social heart of the Koasati community.¹² From St. Peter's the community extends nearly five miles to the west and one and one half miles to the east; to the north and south the distances are approximately two miles and one mile, respectively. The 30 30' latitude line passes just to the south of the community; the 92 45' longitude line bisects the community two miles west of St. Peter's. If the community boundary lines had been extended

¹¹The estimate of Leeds in a conversation with the author.

¹²The term community is used here to indicate the geographical area over which Koasati settlement is spread. Thus, no Koasati home exists outside of the community. At the same time several white and Negro homes are included within it. Community also has an historical implication. It implies occupation of the prescribed area since 1884, the date the Koasati appeared on Bayou Blue for the first time.

For picture of the church see photograph 2, p. 126, this ms.



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St. Peter's Congregational Church. The structure was erected in 1934. The fence surrounding the church was added in 1953. (Photograph by the author, June, 1953).

to form a rectangle, 20.15 square miles of territory would be included. Large areas, however, were carved from the rectangle in the northwestern and southeastern sectors where Koasati homes do not exist. The present community contains approximately 16 square miles of territory.¹³

The Physical Setting

Physiography

As far as the eye can see the land is level. And this attribute of the natural landscape is attributable to geological forces stemming from the Pleistocene epoch.

The topography of this area is essentially that of a youthful plain sloping seaward. In Beauregard and Allen Parishes there are three distinct steplike levels of this plain which are called terraces. The coastwise terrace is somewhat lower, flatter, and less dissected than the adjoining inland terrace. The youngest of the three terraces, the Prairie, occupies the most southern position. Next inland is the Montgomery, and farthest inland is the Bentley, which is the oldest of these terraces.¹⁴

The Koasati community is situated on the Prairie terrace. Just north of Elton an elevation of 30 feet above sea level is recorded and the land is known to slope only 2 feet per mile.¹⁵ The

¹³See map, fig. 4, p. 222

¹⁴Wilbur C. Holland, et.al., Geology of Beauregard and Allen Parishes, Geol. Bull. no. 27, Dep't of Conservation, La. Geol. Survey, Baton Rouge, May, 1952. p. 15.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 45.

slight slope and comparative youth of the Prairie terrace are chiefly responsible for the poor drainage in the area. In the northwest corner of the community Bayou Blue forms a portion of the boundary. It is the major water body in the area. It winds its way southward through the community, finally turns eastward near the Allen Parish - Jefferson Parish line, and then reappears in the community in the southwestern sector where it continues to wind its way to the northeast. Its flow is often barely perceptible.

Although level, the landscape is not monotonous. Occasional stands of yellow pine and cypress, the dwellings of the Indians, and other man-made features add variety to the landscape.

Earthen ridges, between one and two feet in height and less than three feet across, appear on the surface.¹⁶ These are evidences of man's occupancy, for they constitute the levees set up by the rice farmers to hold the irrigation waters in check. They make an impression on the landscape in the early summer before the long rice shoots rise to hide them from view.¹⁷ Earthen ridges also line the drainage ditches or laterals, cut by the farmers to insure the flow of the necessary water to the rice fields. In country level to the extreme even slight elevations leave an impression.

¹⁶See photograph 3, p.129 , this ms.

¹⁷See photograph 4, p.130 , this ms.



-3-

Earthen ridges, between one or two feet in height and less than three feet across, appear on the surface. These are evidences of man's occupance, for they constitute the levees set up by the rice farmers to hold the irrigation waters in check. They make an impression on the landscape in the early summer before the long rice shoots rise to hide them from view. (Photograph by the author, June, 1952).



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In late summer the levees can no longer be seen. The tall rice shoots hide them from view. (Photograph by the author, August, 1952).

On both sides of Bayou Blue and within the stream itself a rich tree growth appears. Cypress predominated although stands of oak and hickory are also present. The dominant tree in the community as a whole is the long-leaf yellow pine. This is second-growth timber, little of which is merchantable at the present time.¹⁸

Berry bushes - particularly the blackberry and mahaw - appear in clusters between the trees.

In the early days of the community the area abounded in game. Deer and bear were known; squirrel, rabbit, and raccoon were hunted. A rich bird life was available. Today, the small game is still plentiful, but the deer and bear have disappeared.

Climate

The low elevation has little to do with the climatic pattern. The chief climatic controls here are latitude and proximity to the Gulf of Mexico.¹⁹ The latitude (30° 30'), near the Gulf coast, insures a subtropical climate; the waters of the Gulf itself range in temperature from 64 F. in February to 84 F. in August. The effects of both can readily be seen from the figures for the

¹⁸Much of the timber is owned by the Bell Lumber Co. The Koasati first sold land to J. A. Bell in February, 1909. Mr. Bell soon thereafter employed the Indians in cutting his logs. This information was supplied by the Honorable C. L. Marcantel, Mayor of Elton, Louisiana, in a letter to the author.

¹⁹Climate and Man, Yearbook of Agriculture, House Document no. 27, 77th Cong., 1st sess. Washington, 1941. p. 902.

climatic station at Jennings, Jefferson Davis Parish, a good representative for the Bayou Blue area.²⁰

Over a forty-year period Jennings has an average January temperature of 53.0 F.; the average temperature in July is 82.1 F. Temperatures rarely dip below 15 in the winter, or do they frequently exceed 95 in summer. The humidity is high.

From the point of view of precipitation this is a wet land. Jennings records an annual precipitation of 55.04 inches with a double maximum coming in July (6.13) and December and January (5.74 and 5.23 inches), respectively.²¹ While fine for the crops the heavy rainfall plays havoc with the dirt roads that traverse the community. After a hard summer rain they are quite impassable by automobile or truck. The hot sun, however, soon helps to dry the water from the roads and the surrounding countryside.

²⁰Ibid., p. 894.

Elizabeth, Allen Parish, Louisiana, has an average July temperature of 82.1, an average January temperature of 51.3.

²¹Ibid., p. 894.

The rainfall fluctuates considerably. For the 30-year period 1921-1950, Jennings recorded an average annual rainfall of 63.59 inches. January and February were the rainiest months (6.01 and 7.45 inches respectively); July recorded 5.36 inches. This information was supplied by Mr. John Vann, Geography Department, Louisiana State University, in a note to the author.

Elizabeth records an annual precipitation of 57.26 inches.

There are times when the land remains parched, when the ground is dry and the laterals no longer hold water. Such times, fortunately, are rare. August is the most likely time for such a phenomenon to take place. The Jennings station records 5.74 inches of precipitation for that month. Yet the August of 1952 was very dry. The roads between Elton and Bayou Blue were baked hard.

Population

The population of the present community has at no time exceeded 250.²² The present population is 167, totalling 87 females and 80 males.²³ The so-called elders of the tribe are comparatively young. Kinney Williams, for example, is in his middle sixties; Mrs. Ency Abbott is in her middle fifties. Both were born in the present community. This serves to indicate that the average tribesman dies at a relatively early age. The present community is also a prolific one. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that 45 of the total Koasati population are under 16 in age, and that twenty of these are under 6.²⁴ Anomalies to the

²²The statement of Reverend Leeds in a conversation with the author.

²³See footnote 54, p. 18, this ms.

²⁴Koasati children who attend the public schools generally know exactly how old they are. Elders in the community are never quite certain. The estimate is the author's based upon careful observation.

See photograph 5, p. 134, this ms.



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Koasati youngsters. The present Koasati community is a prolific one. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that 45 of the total Koasati population are under 16 in age, and that 20 of these are under 6. (Photograph by the author, June, 1952).

situation exist of course. Jeff Abbey, the late chief of the Koasati, lived until the ripe old age of 97.

Homes and Road Pattern

In 1935 the community contained 60 houses.²⁵ Of these 18 definitely belonged to white owners, 1 to a Negro.²⁶ The remainder were homes of the Koasati, although informants expressed considerable doubt concerning the occupants in five cases. Clusters of Indian homes appeared in the northeastern and northwestern sectors of the community; for the most part, however, the houses were well dispersed.²⁷ It is notable that Indian homes did not, and do not at the present date, appear on the banks of Bayou Blue, a departure from the mode of Indian settlement in the past.²⁸

Our first description of Koasati house types in the present community is furnished to us by Leeds, who visited the Indians for the first time in 1893.²⁹ The fact that the homes are described as

²⁵See map, fig. 4, p. 222, this ms.

²⁶From the statements of Kinney Williams, Bel Abbey, and Douglas John who recalled for the author the occupants of the houses within the community.

²⁷See map, fig. 4, p. 222, this ms.

²⁸This was a consequence of land ownership. Many of the homesteads had no frontage on the Bayou Blue. The navigability of the bayou may also have been a factor. Its flow is often not perceptible.

²⁹See p. 15, this ms.

"bark-roofed huts" indicates that the pattern established during the migrations was retained by the Koasati when they moved to Bayou Blue.³⁰ Small one-room log cabins may also have been erected at this time.

Today Koasati homes are unpainted one-story rectangular gable-roofed structures mounted on concrete piles twelve to eighteen inches in height. They are constructed of timber planks mounted vertically. They may have a front porch with three poles supporting a porch roof. One poorly constructed log cabin can still be seen in the community. The houses consist of either one, two, or four rooms.

The home of Bel Abbey, typical of the community, is a two-room gable-roofed structure with attached gable-roofed porch.³¹ One room, in which one large bed is located serves as a bedroom for the five members of the Abbey family. The second room serves as the kitchen. A stove and a table and chairs complete the furnishings. No central heating, no sewage disposal unit, and no sink water is available. A water pump and out-house are located behind the dwelling. Electricity was introduced to the Abbey home for the first time in March, 1953.³²

³⁰See pp. 76-78, this ms.

³¹Bel Abbey's home was built in 1948. See photograph 6, p. 137.

³²The first Koasati homes to procure electricity were those of Solomon Batisse and Joe Langley in the northeastern sector of the community in 1948.



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The home of Bel Abbey, typical of the Kocasati community, is a two-room gable-roofed structure with attached gable-roofed porch. It was constructed in 1948. (Photograph by the author, June, 1952).

The change in house type requires an explanation. Photographs taken by Taylor in the summer of 1936 indicate that the two-room gable-roofed structure with attached gable-roofed porch was known at that date. Kinney Williams states that such gable-roofed dwellings were known in the community as early as the first world war.³³ The statement appears credible. By 1909, the Koasati were already cutting lumber for the Bell interests in the area,³⁴ and the French farmers had begun by 1910 the occupation of sites within and in proximity to the Koasati community. The farmers built the gable-roofed dwelling mounted on piles.³⁵ The Indians and the Negroes who soon entered the prairies of southwestern Louisiana, came to build in the same manner.

The road pattern indicates a definite north-south alignment. The best road in the community, a hard-packed dirt road, leads north from Elton, northwest across a wooden plank bridge over Bayou Blue,³⁶ thence between St. Peter's church and the Indian cemetery, on to the north. A tributary road enters the main road between the Indian school and the church. In 1935 it was a major avenue through the woods for persons approaching the church from

³³The statement of Kinney Williams in a conversation with the author.

³⁴See footnote 18, p. 131, this ms.

³⁵Statement of Odell Bertrand in a conversation with the author.

³⁶See photographs 7 and 8, pp. 139-140, this ms.



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The best road in the Koasati community. It leads north from Elton. The young lady is Joyce Abbey. (Photograph by the author, August, 1952).



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Wooden plank bridge over the Bayou Blue.
(Photograph by the author, June, 1952).

the northwest. Today it is merely a dirt path still used by persons on foot; automobiles cannot now traverse it. A new road which supports motor vehicles has been built to the west of the church. The only road providing east-west passage across the community is what is commonly called the "CC" road,³⁷ laid out in the early thirties. It is favored today by a string of Indian homes which are located on its south side. The lands north of the road are owned by the Bell Lumber Co.

Social Organization

It has been pointed out that the phratry, the town and clan moieties, and the clan system, significant Koasati institutions in 1750, had all but disappeared during the migration period.³⁸ Knowledge of the phratry was first to go. None of Taylor's informants mention it. The memory of the town and clan moieties, on the other hand, was retained,³⁹ although neither served as important aspects of the Koasati lifeway after the early migrations. Present-day tribesmen interviewed by the present author (1952) have no knowledge of the Hathagalgi and Tcilokogalgi, or of the division of

³⁷"CC" is short for the CCC which constructed the road, using the Indians as laborers.

³⁸See pp. 78-80, this ms.

³⁹Taylor, Notes, op. cit. The memory (1937) was very vague. Mention was made of the red and white towns, but the functions of each were unknown.

the towns into rival fires.⁴⁰ Knowledge of the clan, however, has remained with the tribesmen to this very day. In summer, 1952, Kinney Williams recalled the following clans: Turkey, Wildcat, Alligator, Panther, Wind, Beaver, and Daddy-longlegs. The idea of the phratry and moiety were unknown to him.

Twenty tribespeople were asked to identify the clan to which they belonged.⁴¹ Seven persons knew that they were members of either the Turkey or Wildcat clan; one person thought that his mother told him that he was from the Wind family; others stated that they did not know. Of the latter several expressed the view that they knew of the clans' existence, and knew, too, that the clans were exogamous, and that descent was through the mother. When asked if he would have married a member of his own clan if he loved her, Bel Abbey did not reply. Loris Abbott and Fred Langley, newlyweds, knew nothing of their clan affiliations. As a result of the disintegration of the clan system the Koasati had turned to the family as their chief social tie.⁴² This tie has been strengthened during the life of the present community. The concept is similar to the one adhered to by their white neighbors. The family consists of the mother, father, and offspring. On rare occasions an aged man

⁴⁰See pp. 32-33, this ms.

⁴¹All persons asked to respond to the query were married and had passed their twentieth birthday.

⁴²See pp. 81-83, this ms.

whose wife has passed away may join the family.⁴³ The children of the daughter of the house and their father are always welcome to stay with the family if the occasion demands.

The classificatory relationship system of the Koasati, recorded by Swanton,⁴⁴ has undergone several innovations since the opening decade of the present century. Ki - the term for mother by self male and self female is unknown today. Tsmiskit, pichi, or mama are used in its stead. When a Koasati child refers to his mother as pichi he is likely to be reprimanded. It is an "old" term. The Koasati of the present day prefer the white man's "mama." The term for uncle used by self male and self female is tcofe as Swanton records it. Atcoba, old man, is no longer used to mean uncle. Words for cousin as mother's sister's children (male - tatcaki anakha and female - fonosi anakha) are no longer employed. Cousins are grouped together under the designation imalachki (kinfolk). Other designations are intact.

Political Organization

The Koasati have retained the chieftainship although the functions of the chief himself, and the reasons for his selection, considerably altered during the migration period, have reverted in part to the practice known in the Creek Confederacy.

⁴³Kinney Williams lived with his daughter's family during a recent illness (winter, 1952-53).

⁴⁴See footnote 47, p. 82, this ms.

In the earliest days of the present community the chief continued to be the tribe's leading medicine man.⁴⁵ In addition to curing the sick he was responsible for regulating the planting of the crops, for giving advice to his people, and for overseeing their morals.⁴⁶ He was assisted by the inkapitani, the arbiter of justice for the Koasati community.⁴⁷

The chief's role was undermined by Koasati land ownership, the land in the present community having been parceled out in 160-acre homesteads, owned by an individual, but operated by the family rather than the tribe. The chief lost his power of regulating crop planting, and in overseeing the tribesmen's morals, which came to be family functions. His role as a medicine man, although retained, was to come under heavy censure from Reverend Paul Leeds.⁴⁸ Blood-letting, sucking of blood, the application and drinking of boiled herbs, roots, and leaves, all were to pass from the scene under Leeds' teachings, although the knowledge of these practices has been retained in the present community virtually to the present

⁴⁵See p. 82, this ms.

⁴⁶Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

⁴⁷See p. 83, this ms.

⁴⁸Mr. Leeds' impact upon the Koasati will be described under Religion, pp. 146-148.

day.⁴⁹

With his functions cut from under him the Koasati chief reverted to a position similar to the one he held in the Creek Confederacy; he was selected on the basis of oratorical ability and his being the "beloved man" of the tribe. Such a man was Jeff Abbey, who passed away on February 15, 1951.

The inkapitani lost his function soon after the Koasati arrived in the present community. Justice, supervised by the family rather than by the clan or tribe, no longer had need of his services. White police officers arriving with the French rice farmers shortly after the turn of the century contributed to the inkapitani's demise. By 1937 the tribesmen already thought of the inkapitani as a relic of the ancient past.⁵⁰

Meeting in council shortly after Jeff Abbey's death the Koasati sought to elect a new chief. Preceding the election two church hymns were sung and a prayer spoken in Koasati asking for the Lord's protection was offered.⁵¹

⁴⁹There is no medicine man in the Koasati community today. The daughter of Jeff Abbey recalls several of the mixtures known to her father but they are no longer used. Koasati tribesmen were encouraged following World War II--and up until the summer of 1952--to attend the chapter house near the St. Peter's church the second Tuesday of each month to be examined by a physician. Dr. Freeman, of Basile, La., was in charge of a clinic held there for the tribesmen. His unfortunate death ended the practice.

⁵⁰Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

⁵¹The account of the election for the chieftainship was told to the author by Bel Abbey.

Three candidates were nominated. Clan association was not specified. Each made a short talk in his behalf. Thirty-three votes were cast and Martin Abbey was returned the winner. Bel Abbey and Douglas John trailed. The winner secured twenty-six votes. Shortly thereafter, however, the chief elect left the community for the Alabama-Koasati Reservation in Texas. Bel Abbey was to serve as acting chief in his absence.

Elton's mayor, the Honorable Cursey L. Marcantel, was appointed assistant chief. Traits peculiar to the Creek culture have reappeared in the institution of the chieftainship. The chief is again elected for his oratorical powers and for his being beloved by members of the tribe; the inclusion of an assistant chief also had its antecedents in the past.

However, the functions of the chief are no longer as varied and significant. It is a title without function, for the chief is only rarely called upon to preside at council meetings. To the Indians the chieftainship serves to recall that such a thing once was; to the whites it brings to mind further that the Koasati are "real" Indians.

Religion

Religion plays an important role in the lives of the Koasati of the present day. It helps to mold the character, both morally and spiritually, of the individual tribesman, provides an important outlet for his social needs, and is largely responsible for

converting the Koasati to Christianity.⁵²

Leeds discovered that the Koasati worshipped Mink-co chitto, the "Great Chief", or Aba Chacoli, "He who resides above",⁵³ that they worship water and tree spirits,⁵⁴ that the tribesmen were often drunk, that they participated in "pagan" dances, and engaged in the ball play which he considered un-Christian. These practices Leeds intended to alter.

For seven years Leeds labored among the Koasati preaching to them when he met them on the road, and visiting with them in their homes. Finally, in March, 1901, by their own initiative the Koasati asked that Leeds conduct services for them at their own schoolhouse. In September of the same year the Koasati had completed the building of their first church; it was called St. Peter's.

A Sunday school was also begun in 1901. Its object was to teach the scriptures. Several years later a Koasati himself was to become adept at preaching. Leeds says of him:

One of the first converts was a young man named Mark Robinson. Being bright, devoted, and a natural leader...he soon became a pillar in the church. Carrying a New Testament with him when at work he learned to be rather proficient in reading and understanding it,...He soon became

⁵²Some of the Koasati may have already been introduced to Christianity by Sam Reed, while the Indians were still living in Indian Village. See p. 87, this ms.

For Mr. Leeds' observations of 1893 see p. 84, this ms.

⁵³See p. 84, this ms.

⁵⁴See p. 85, this ms.

an interpreter, and until his death in 1934, he interpreted the Word for all speakers.⁵⁵

As a result of Mr. Leeds' teachings the concept of the Lord Jesus Christ entered the Koasati religious system. He became to members of the tribe Imililikiso o chosi -- "He who never dies" -- or Son of God. The idea had penetrated the Koasati mind so deeply by 1936 that Sissy Abbey suggested in that year that year that Imililikiso was the only god of the Koasati, that he had once been on earth and had taught the people medicine.⁵⁶

Christian teachings, as well as traits stemming from the Creek culture, are in evidence in the following tales:

One day Imililikso was walking down the road. He saw a man working in the field beside the road and asked him what he was doing. The man said, 'I am planting trees.' Imililikso said, 'That is good' and went on. The next day the man came to work and saw that the trees were all grown up. He was very angry when he saw how big they were. Then he got his saw and cut them down. Imililikso had gone on and saw another man working in a field and asked what he was doing. The man answered that he was planting stones. Imililikso said that was fine and went on. (Here one informant said that the next day there were many stones all over the place and that is why there are so many stones today, the other informant didn't mention this). The people hated him, that is why they never gave him the correct answer. He kept going and saw an old man and old woman working in the field. When he asked what they were doing, they said they were trying to plant food be-

⁵⁵From the miscellaneous notes of Paul Leeds, hereafter cited as Notes op. cit., p. 33.

th Sissy Abbey.

⁵⁶Taylor, op. cit., p. 33. The information was obtained in an interview with Sissy Abbey.

cause they didn't have anything in the house to eat. They said they were too old to work. The next morning when the old people woke up, they saw their house was changed, it was brand new and everything in it was new. The man saw this first and went and woke the woman and kissed her. They went into the kitchen and found it full of food. There were plenty of cattle and sheep in the new barn. Corn was growing in the field. But Imililikso had gone on. After a while he was tired and lay down in the road to sleep. Three men came along and found him. One of the men saw him and laughed and laughed until he got very red, he became an Indian. The next man laughed harder than the first and laughed until he became black and blue and became a negro. The other man didn't laugh at all, didn't even smile, he was a White man. He got some fig leaves and put them over Imililikso and went on. Imililikso awoke. He told the people he was going to be crucified. He said, 'If the people hate me and want to kill me, you will have to get a blind man to do it'. After a while the people caught him and put him on a cross. They got a blind man and gave him a spear. Everybody went to the cross and put Imililikso on it and put the spear to his side. They got the blind man to push the spear. The blood spurted on the blind man's eyes. When he wiped one eye, he could see out of it, then he wiped the other and could see out of it. He was very sorry when he saw what he had done. They took Imililikso and buried him. He told the people, 'Watch for me four days after I am crucified'. Everyone watched and his mother watched very closely. On the fourth morning, before dawn they heard a great noise from the grave and everybody hurried down. When they got there, the coffin was about ten feet off the ground. Everyone watched it as it went up, going around and around into the clouds. When it got there a little book fell down. When it got to earth everyone ran after it, but the Whites got there first. They opened the book and tried to make the Indian read, but the Indian couldn't read, so the book was given to the Whites. The Indians didn't

have anything, so the Whites gave them a gun and said, 'take this gun to use to get meat, if you use it you can have food'. After that the ruler asked the people, 'When I die put my coffin in a room and make four holes in it'. He also asked them to watch him for four days. They did this when he died. They heard a noise in the room and came to see what was making the noise, some honey bees were humming in the room. The bees scattered all over the room in groups, every group with a leader. Therefore the honey bees are called the White government.⁵⁷

Congregational services are held each Sunday at the new St. Peter's Church, erected in 1934.⁵⁸ Mr. Leeds still preaches twice each month, although more and more church affairs are handled by the Indians themselves. Services are conducted in English although Koasati translations must also be rendered. The present interpreter for his people is Solomon Batisse.

For a people whose level of living is very low and whose social luxuries are few the church performs an important function. Here the Koasati meet to discuss their individual or tribal problems, to exchange gossip, to visit with relatives, as well as to worship the Lord. Often as many as seventy persons are on hand for services on Sunday morning. On Easter Sunday, 1952, over one hundred Koasati were counted at the church site.

⁵⁷Lyda Averill Taylor, unpublished account of the Koasati, 1937, hereafter cited as Account.

⁵⁸The old St. Peter's church was dismantled in the summer of 1934 and the new one built from materials purchased largely from the Hillyer Deutch Edwards mill at Oakdale. The funds were derived in the form of gifts from friends in the Scofield Memorial Church, Dallas Texas. The new church was completed on September 15, 1934.

Easter Sunday is a day of merriment as well as prayer. After services Easter eggs are hidden in the "piney woods" and the children are sent out to gather them in. A small reward is given to the individual who collects the greatest number of eggs. The Koasati look forward all year to Easter Sunday.

Church enrollment has grown considerably. The Congregational Yearbook of 1925 listed the total Koasati church membership at 59 persons; in 1929, 63 persons; 1930, 71; 1934, 81; while the St. Peter's church roll book listed 167 church members in 1952.

Cosmography

Significant changes have taken place in Koasati cosmography since Mr. Leeds' arrival in the community. The Indians were taught to reckon time in terms of twelve months rather than in terms of the horns of the deer.⁵⁹ Koasati terms were applied to each month. These were recorded by Swanton through his informant George Henry:⁶⁰

⁵⁹See pp. 88-89, this ms.

This practice was probably inaugurated under pressure from the whites in the Elton-Kinder area. Leeds takes no credit for it. Taylor does not mention the agent responsible for the change.

⁶⁰John R. Swanton, Forty-second annual report, Bur. Amer. Ethn., 1924-1925, p. 402.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Koasati Equivalent</u>	<u>Translation</u>
January	La fi otcese	Little winter
February		
March	Mahale hase	Wind moon
April	Nasa ltci hase	Planting moon
May	Ba ktco tabatle hase	May haws ripe
June	Hase tatcolafka	Halfway month
July	Behe ways hase	Mulberries ripe
August		
September		
October		
November	Beholo s kona	Whippoorwill moon
December	La fi tcoba	Big winter

In 1937 Jeff Abbey could recall the names of eight of the Koasati equivalents:⁶¹

<u>Month</u>	<u>Koasati Equivalent</u>	<u>Translation</u>
January	laskacako	when there is ice and snow
February	kasathakhase	winter moon
March	faplehase	the month when it is windy
April		
May	behehase	when the mulberries are ripe
June	bakcohase	when blackberries are ripe
July		
August		
September		
October	ettoheselanahase	when leaves turn yellow and start to fall
November	okkelocahase	when the leaves have fallen and make water black when put into it
December	hasatocolafka	(translation unrecorded)

⁶¹Taylor, Notes, op. cit.,

Discrepancies in the lists are noteworthy. March had passed from Mahale hase - Wind moon to faplehase - the month when it is windy; June equivalents bear little relationship with one another, as do many of the other months. The Koasati had come to designate the names of the months in English. Today the English names are used universally.

Today the earth spirits are no longer worshipped and the elements and phenomena in nature are not given life; the thunder (winnika) no longer makes noise by sticking on trees; the sun does not lie at the apex of a round dome over a flat earth; the stars no longer dance as men do in the heavens. The Koasati have become completely acculturated to the white man's Christian religion, and accept his views on the nature and makeup of the world.

The Life Cycle

Birth

Throughout the life of the present community child bearing has been considered a blessing. Today mothers who bear no children are pitied rather than looked down upon and medicines are no longer taken to aid in procreation. Such practices were discontinued as the medicine man declined in importance, and the knowledge of preparing the herbs and roots passed from the scene.

The Koasati have retained the fear of bearing twins. For-

unately, no mother has borne twins in the life of the present community.⁶²

Mothers continued to console their daughters in the early days of the present community and instructed them in matters of health when a child was expected, but the birth was no longer unattended.⁶³ Mother, or an aunt, or both, were often in attendance.⁶⁴ This change may have been instituted by the Koasati in imitation of their white neighbors, their white teachers, or through the influence of Reverend Leeds. Today Koasati mothers rarely give birth to children within the community. Mothers are taken to the small hospital in Oberlin, where under a physician's care, the child is born.

Under the influence of Leeds and the white teachers of the community a name is bestowed on the new born at birth. The names are English names; Indian names are no longer employed. Koasati children continue to be weaned at about age three.

The custom of shearing the hair at age four months and the ceremony connected with it continue to be practiced in the Koasati

⁶²The statement of Kinney Williams in a conversation with the author.

⁶³See p. 91, this ms. for the earlier practice.

⁶⁴Mrs. Ency Abbott through Marie Thompson to the author.

community today.⁶⁵

While the education of the youngsters was guided by the maternal grandfather, the maternal uncle, the parents, and the inkapitani in the early days of the community, sweeping changes were introduced as white contacts increased.

In 1913 Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Unsign were brought to the community to instruct the Indians in the English language and to assist them in learning church songs and hymns.⁶⁶ They were followed by Mr. L. L. Simmons in 1915, who remained in the community for over twenty years. Unfortunately, only the small children went to school; the young adults resisted the change; the older folks saw little need to learn.⁶⁷

For the community, commuting to school was a major problem. It was finally solved by the "Covered Wagon," a canvas-covered cart drawn by a horse which made regular stops at specific points to pick up the children. Alfred John; Kinney Williams, for a ten-year period; Ed Wilson; and Nicy Poncho, the last driver, all served in driving the children to school.

Loris Langley, also a driver of the covered wagon, says of her duties for a given day:

⁶⁵For a discussion of the custom and ceremony see p. 92, this ms.

⁶⁶See footnote 51, p. 17, this ms.

⁶⁷The statement of Kinney Williams to the author.

I rose at between three-thirty and four in the morning to begin rounds. George (her brother) and me picked up all the children. While they were in school I worked in the garden close to the school and helped with the lunches served. Biney Williams was the cook.⁶⁸

Koasati children who were able were encouraged to attend the public schools in Elton.⁶⁹ As early as 1938 Mr. Leeds reported that, "Several of the young people have graduated from the Elton high school, a few miles from the church, and two have had from one to three years in Junior High, at other places."⁷⁰

The record is better at the present date. Mr. Robin, principal of the Elton High School, reports that seventeen Koasati children are in the Elton schools ranging from the primary grades through the final year of high school. Iwant John, a recent graduate of the high school, is going on to college. Mr. Robin reports that Koasati children are not his best pupils; they are a minority in the school room who have a considerable language difficulty to overcome; yet their work is dependable. They are extremely willing to learn.⁷¹

⁶⁸The statement of Loris Langley to the author.

⁶⁹Segregation laws do not apply to the Indian in Louisiana. Negro children must attend the Negro schools.

⁷⁰Paul Leeds, A long trail to Christ, or how the Koasati Indians were first evangelized. Unpublished, 1938. The paper will hereafter be referred to as Long Trail.

⁷¹From Mr. Robin in a conversation with the author, spring, 1952.

That schooling is deemed important by the Koasati can be readily shown:

One widow cut wood in the forest, like a man, and kept four children in school, one of them graduating from high school with a good record.⁷²

Bel Abbey sends his three daughters to the Elton schools today.

Parents have played an important educational role throughout the life of the present community. In the earliest days mothers taught their daughters to make the twilled plaited basket, to sew, to weave, to tan skins, to wield the hoe; they were taught to prepare Koasati dishes and to make mattresses and pillows of Spanish moss. Fathers taught their sons to hunt, to swim, to fish, to fashion the bow and arrow and the cane blow gun. Mothers and fathers both taught the children to be quiet in the presence of elders and strangers, to be neat and clean at all times. The white teachers after their arrival in the community assisted in the latter. While formal teaching - the English language, numbers, and church hymns - fell to the white teachers after 1913, the parents continued to exercise the educational functions as outlined. That outline continues to the present day. Koasati mothers teach their

⁷²Leeds, Long Trail, op. cit., p. 4.

daughters to make the coiled basket today,⁷³ teach them to sew, to attend to the garden plots, and to cook. Fathers continue to instruct their sons in hunting, fishing, in swimming, and in the care of the family pick-up truck; the making of the bow and the cane blowgun, like the twilled plaited basket, are passing from the scene.

Marriage

Like Koasati girls before them, unmarried girls of the present community were and are required to remain chaste prior to marriage. The sex act when committed often resulted in the early days of the community in marriage. The young man simply moved into the home of his bride at an appointed time. The first Koasati marriage license was issued in 1893.⁷⁴

Consent to marry a young man is still granted by a young lady's parents. The maternal uncle is no longer consulted and the chief is no longer informed of the arrangement. The marriage age for both boys and girls has risen since the earliest days of the community. This is for two reasons: more and more Koasati children are going to the high schools in Elton and Kinder; more schooling tends to delay the marriage date. Boys who served in

⁷³Reasons for this are given on p. 176, this ms.

⁷⁴See land deed 1939, State of Louisiana, Parish of Jefferson Davis. Copy in possession of Bel Abbey.

World War II also postponed their marriage dates. Girls today marry at about 18, boys at 22. Marriage ceremonies are often performed in the courthouse at Oberlin.⁷⁵

Marriages are occasionally contracted with persons outside of the tribe. Jeff Abbey's daughter is the wife of a Shawnee Indian; one Koasati woman is the wife of a Frenchman of the immediate vicinity.⁷⁶ Marriages with Alabama Indians from the Alabama Koasati Reservation in Texas are not uncommon.

Eloping and adultery, subject to severe punishments in the Koasati past,⁷⁷ have been no problem in the present community. Leeds maintains that both have been non-existent since he arrived in the area.⁷⁸ At the same time the author discovered no case of divorce, and not one case in which a divorcee lived in a tribesman's memory.

Death and Burial

Whether or not the body was ever interred in the present community with the knees drawn up to the chin cannot be ascertained.

⁷⁵Bel Abbey in a conversation with the author.

⁷⁶Susie Williams states that her grandfather, Koasati Williams, a former chief of the tribe, married a white woman. This is the only case of its kind known to the author. Marriages between Indians and non-Indians are frowned upon.

⁷⁷See p. 95, this ms.

⁷⁸Paul Leeds in a conversation with the author.

Informants could not say for certain. The practice may have been abandoned during the migration period. Personal possessions were placed with the body, however,⁷⁹ and the body interred away from the Indian homes in the "piney woods." No burial ground existed in the earliest days of the community.

Today two cemeteries exist in the Koasati community. One is located a half mile east of the St. Peter's church, the other three-quarters of a mile north of it.

Three types of grave markings can be distinguished.⁸⁰ The earliest graves are individually surrounded by picket fences. Only three of the types survive and no identification marks are visible. The fences were originally constructed to keep intruders out. It was suggested that one of the graves surrounded by such a fence occupied the lowest ground available, it being the wish of the dead shaman who was buried there to have his grave flooded at the time of a heavy rain.⁸¹ The second-type grave is marked by an earth hillock, at the head of which a wooden plaque is mounted. The

⁷⁹Kimney Williams in a conversation with the author.

⁸⁰See photographs 9, 10, 11, and 12, pp. 162, 163, 164, and 165, this ms.

⁸¹Mrs. Ency Abbott through Bel Abbey in a conversation with the author.



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The earliest graves are individually surrounded by picket fences. They were originally constructed to keep intruders out. It was suggested by Ency Abbott that a grave surrounded by such a fence occupied the lowest ground available, it being the wish of the dead shaman who was buried there to have his grave flooded at the time of a heavy rain. (Photograph by the author, August, 1952).



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Koasati graves are often marked by an earth hillock, at the head of which a wooden plaque is mounted. At the right is the stone recently added to Jeff Abbey's grave. (Photograph by the author, August, 1952).



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Koasati graves are often bestrewn with jars and broken bits of glass. The jars used to hold flowers are not collected after the flowers die. Note the wooden plaques. (Photograph by the author, August, 1952).



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Koasati graveyard scene. Note the stone vault set up for Philip J. Williams, a World War II veteran who died on July 26, 1947. (Photograph by the author, August, 1952).

plaque indicates the date of birth and date of death of the deceased. Koasati mourners place flowers in glass jars or bottles above the graves. Since these are never removed and are played upon by the elements, Koasati graves are bestrewn with bits of glass, turned-over jars, and broken bottles. The third type of grave marking appeared after World War II. A marble vault and slab were set up for Philip J. Williams, a World War II veteran who died on July 26, 1947. A small marble slab appears over the grave of the late chief, Jeff Abbey, who died on February 15, 1951.

Afterlife

Koasati thoughts on afterlife have been altered directly through the influence of Reverend Leeds. Heaven is up; those who have been good through their lives, who have been kind to their neighbors, who have assisted the sick and weak, who have attended church, they will go to heaven. Hell is down; those who have been evil, those who rob, steal, commit adultery, those who forsake their God, they will go to hell.⁸²

The Economy

During the first quarter century of the Koasati community's existence the economy followed the pattern established during the migration period. The Koasati continued to farm, to hunt, and to fish. The implements, weapons, and methods employed at Indian

⁸² Bel Abbey in a conversation with the author

Village were carried into the present community.

Agriculture has waned considerably. In the earliest days of the community it was not practiced at all. The tribesmen relied solely on hunting, fishing, and gathering in the piney woods. Soon, however, the small subsistence garden appeared behind every Koasati dwelling.⁸³ Before long portions of the homesteaded acres were being put to seed. The chief crop was corn, as of old.

This idyllic economic pattern, essentially little changed since the days of the Creek Confederacy, was shattered by the coming of the rice farmer to southwestern Louisiana, and ultimately to the lands demarcated today as the Koasati community.

Rice had been planted by the Acadian farmers soon after their arrival in the eastern portions of the Louisiana prairies in 1755.⁸⁴ They learned to raise rice in small ponds, planted it by hand, cut and threshed it with sickle and flail, and hulled the grain in mortar and pestle. The work was laborious; the crops were small. But these methods were retained until the arrival on the Louisiana prairies of the farmers from the Middle West.

⁸³The return of the garden plot to its place behind the house is a consequence of land ownership and the abandonment of planting and harvesting on a communal basis. The garden plot continues to survive at the present date.

⁸⁴Lauren C. Post, "The Rice Country of Southwestern Louisiana". Geog. Rev., vol. 30, 1940. p. 579.

In 1882 the Southern Pacific Railroad was extended across the prairie.⁸⁵ With it came an influx of farmers from Iowa, Illinois, and Nebraska, who were anxious to attempt to plant rice on the prairie utilizing the methods best known to them - the methods of the corn and wheat farmers.⁸⁶

The venture was immediately crowned with success. The problems of irrigation, cultivation, harvesting, and milling were all systematically worked out. David Abbott was responsible for solving the problem of raising water from the bayous to the prairie by a system of chain buckets;⁸⁷ later, wells were dug and canal systems and laterals for dispatching water through the fields were laid out. The machinery of the Middle West was introduced - especially the binder and reaper. By World War I the tractor was replacing the mule as the chief "beast of burden."⁸⁸ Rice farming was fast becoming the chief form of land utilization on the prairies of southwestern Louisiana.

The land was quickly populated. Farmers from the Middle West and the more enterprising Acadian farmers from the eastern Louisiana prairies moved to the western Louisiana prairies. So, too, did many Negroes.⁸⁹ In 1910 Odell Bertrand, an enterprising

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 580.

⁸⁶Ibid., pp. 585-587.

⁸⁷Crowley Signal, January 30, 1904.

⁸⁸Post, op. cit., p. 585.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 582.

French-speaking rice farmer, arrived in the Koasati community itself.⁹⁰ A friend of the Indian, he and others of like mind, played an important role in the Koasati economic revolution which was to follow.

The Koasati were no longer to be subsistence farmers, hunters, and fishers. They were to become wage earners,⁹¹ and have remained so to this day. Bel Abbey, Fred Langley, and George Abbott work for wages today in the rice fields of Odell Bertrand.

In the winter months (January through March) they are busy plowing and disking the soil prior to planting. They also prepare the levees which will later serve to hold the irrigation waters in check. Late March is ordinarily planting time, but in years of excess rain the planting chores must wait until April. The entire planting operation in 1951 was not completed until June. When the rice begins to rise, the elaborate irrigation system, so vital to rice farming in the southwestern Louisiana prairies, is brought into play. Six inches of water are allowed to inundate the fields. Through the summer months, their feet knee-deep in water, the rice farmers maintain a series of earthen dams which help to restrain or release the life-giving waters. In August, with the rice at the ripening stage, water is cut off. The rice lands are allowed to dry to make way for the combining

⁹⁰Odell Bertrand in a conversation with the author.

⁹¹Wage earning was also spurred on by the acquisition of Indian lands by the J. A. Bell lumbering interests. See footnote 18, p. 131.

operation in late August and early September. Thus the Koasati who are engaged in rice farming are occupied throughout the rice year. Between October and January odd jobs are performed about the farm, tending the stock, repairing the fences or building new ones, or idling away the time at the hunt before the new rice year begins.

The rice pattern is significant in that the Indian has been forced to acquire new farming skills. He now has an intimate knowledge of the tractor, the disk plow, the harrow, the seeder, and other mechanical devices. His vocabulary has become enriched with new words - levee - irrigation - lateral -, and into his life more intimately than ever before has come rice, today the staple in the Koasati diet.

The economic revolution has not been complete, however. Elements of the old Creek culture and the culture of the migration period remain. Behind each Koasati dwelling, for example, is a small garden in which peas, beans (their so-called palena), and cabbages, turnips, cucumbers, and corn are raised.⁹² The garden is still cared for by the women as of old, although the men enjoy wielding the hoe on their days off. The small garden plays a significant role in the Koasati economy. With wages low (Bel Abbey earns \$27.50 in an average week and must support a family of five), the resources of the garden are called upon to bolster the diet.

⁹²See photograph 13, p. 171, this ms.



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Today, as in Creek times, the Koasati cultivate a field behind their homes. Here, their palena, cabbages, turnips, cucumbers, and corn are grown. The young lady is Marjorie Abbey. (Photograph by the author, June, 1952).

All Koasati wage laborers are not rice farmers. Koasati men are employed as laborers in saw mills, as woodcutters, as road repairmen on Louisiana's highways, as farmers; at least one member of the tribe is now an upholsterer who learned his trade in a G.I. school following his services in World War II. These jobs take the Koasati as far west as Lake Charles, as far east as Basile. The Koasati have become commuters; the small pick-up truck is now emblematic of the more prosperous among the tribe. It should be noted that Koasati women have also become wage earners. Young Koasati girls are employed as waitresses in Elton's leading eating establishments; they also serve as general household helpers for prominent Eltonians.

Other elements of the Creek economy are still visible, although they no longer function as vital parts of the Koasati lifeway. The mortar and pestle - common among the Indians of the southeast - remains; the cane blowgun and the bow and arrow remain, which serve to remind the Koasati of the days when he was a hunter. Hunting and fishing, however, are forms of recreation today rather than important factors in the economy.

Of especial importance to the Koasati of the present day is the manufacture of twilled plaited and coiled basketry.⁹³ The funds derived from their sale supplement the meagre salaries

⁹³ See photographs 14, 15, 16, and 17, pp. 173, 174, and 175, this ms.



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The picturer. demonstrate the techniques used
in the manufacture of the twilled plaited basket.
(Photographs by Lyda Averill Taylor, 1937).



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Myrna Abbey demonstrates the completed twilled
plaited basket. (Photograph by the author,
June, 1952).



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The coiled basket is made from pine needles gathered in the neighboring piney woods, and secured in the sewing process by strands of raffia. (Photograph by the author, April, 1951).

which the tribesmen earn. Basket making is woman's work and the fundamentals of basket making are learned early in life. Myrna Abbey had already learned the coiling technique at age five. The youngsters do not learn to make the twilled plaited basket. Many claim it is too difficult to make. As a result only three women of the present-day tribe are twilled plaited basket makers. Because the children are not being taught the technique there is a danger that it will pass from the Koasati scene.

The mother of Bel Abbey is a weaver of the twilled plaited cane basket. Her fingers nimbly execute the typical Creek and Koasati technique - four over and four under - for the cane strands.⁹⁴ The completed basket is shallow - not more than four inches deep - and rectangular - often eighteen inches in length, twelve in width. In former times the baskets served as sieves, as receptacles for maize and products of the garden, and for carrying clothes, but are made today to be sold to white or negro buyers for cash. For such a basket Mrs. Abbott will claim four dollars and fifty cents (\$4.50) on the open market.

In the Creek culture and in the culture of the migration period the coiled basket was unknown. The present-day Koasati first learned of its use and manufacture when Mark Robinson, having

⁹⁴Four over and four under is the ideal Creek technique. The Koasati of today do not always religiously follow it.

visited the Alabama peoples living near Livingston, Texas, purchased such a basket from Maggie Thompson there. According to Kinney Williams, this event occurred before the death of Mrs. Robinson, who had passed away on November 16, 1919. In 1911, when Kinney Williams' first wife was still alive the coiling technique was unknown.

The coiled basket is made from pine needles gathered in the neighboring piney woods, and secured in the sewing process by strands of raffia.⁹⁵ The baskets are oval rather than rectangular, although various forms are made to suit the tastes of prospective customers. The baskets, depending on their size and form, sell today for between one dollar and three dollars and fifty cents.

Beginning in October, 1949, a contingent of the Koasati set up at the time of the International Rice Festival in Crowley, Louisiana, a stand at which the baskets were sold. The idea of so supplementing their salaries was due to the efforts of James Taylor, then a graduate student at Louisiana State University. Dressed in "Indian" clothing to attract customers, Bel and Nora Abbey, as well as Marie Thompson, could be seen selling their wares at the Crowley fair in October, 1951.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Raffia was introduced by Mr. L. L. Simmons.

⁹⁶The Koasati did not attend the Rice Festival in 1952.

Meals and Diet

In order to appreciate the character of the Koasati diet and the nature of the individual meal three factors must be kept in mind: the geographical setting in which the Koasati lives, the cultural milieu to which we can attribute the institutionalization of his eating habits, and the low economic level to which he has become accustomed. The latter is particularly important.

In the earliest days of the community the foods commonly eaten during the migration period were consumed.⁹⁷ Corn continued to be the agricultural staple; the products of the hunt were eaten, and fish were consumed. The leading beverage continued to be tea made from the sassafras root; flour was made from the koonti root.

Like the Koasati of the Creek Confederacy and of the migration period, no fixed eating time was specifically set aside; the Indians ate when they were hungry.

Today Koasati families may eat three times each day; the eating of two meals, however, is not uncommon. Breakfast often consists of a cup of coffee, a slice of bread, and several strips of bacon.⁹⁸ The Koasati diet is conspicuous for its lack of milk

⁹⁷For a discussion of the Koasati diet during the migration period see pp. 111-112, this ms.

⁹⁸At the home of the Abbott's the author enjoyed numerous breakfasts which included two eggs and several strips of bacon, cake procured in Elton, and several cups of coffee. Guests are treated royally among the Koasati.

and the dry cereals common in the homes of their neighbors. It should be pointed out that the Negroes in the neighborhood are also deficient in these items. The common drink is water, procured from the well habitually located to the rear of the house. Coffee and tea are also common beverages. During the summer months water mixed with a fruit-ade is relished.

Rice is the staple in the diet; it covers liberally the Koasati plate at both lunch and supper. At both meals rice is supplemented by a variety of vegetables including peas and beans, corn, cucumbers, turnips, and okra, all grown in the small garden behind the house. White bread, bacon, and other meats are procured in the stores in Elton. Chicken is a favorite. A number of Koasati families raise chickens. Meat, however, is not a common food on the Koasati table. Eggs are eaten by the more prosperous families. Fruits, so important to the Koasati in earlier times, are rarely eaten today. A prize dish during the summer months is watermelon. The Koasati children are fond of picking blackberries in the piney woods.

Creek dishes are virtually non-existent today. One that remains is choachka, a thick corn soup prepared in the manner of 1750, employing the mortar and pestle.⁹⁹

⁹⁹

See footnote 145, p. 111, this ms.

See photograph 18, p. 180, this ms.



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The Koasati mortar and pestle. Demonstrating its use is Loris Langley. (Photograph by the author, June, 1951).

Clothing

In the earliest days of the community the Koasati wore the clothing typical of the migration period.¹⁰⁰ As white contacts increased, however, the Indian abandoned his former clothing habits.

Pictures taken in 1936-37 indicate that many changes had taken place since the earliest days of the community. The women were inclined to wear a dress which extended below the knees rather than the skirt and blouse. Pendants were no longer worn on the garments or on the ears. The women still preferred to wear no type of footwear in the summer. The hair, however, continued to be worn in the manner of the past century.

The men had abandoned completely the wearing of deerskin. Trousers were worn which extended to the ankles. Men no longer wore pendants of any kind and no longer pierced their noses or ears. The handkerchief neckwear had been abandoned. At work the Koasati was wearing an overall suit or a pair of blue jeans. A great change had occurred in hair styling. The men wore their hair short as their white neighbors did.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰See pp. 112-114, this ms.

¹⁰¹The change from wearing long hair to wearing short hair was probably inaugurated at Indian Village. The story is told that a Koasati with long hair had once been jailed. By using his long locks he committed suicide. As a result the white men advised the Koasati to wear their hair short. The story is from Taylor, Notes, op. cit.

Today the Koasati clothing is similar to that worn by their white neighbors. Bel Abbey wears blue jeans similar to those worn by his white partner when working on Mr. Bertrand's farm. The children are dressed as other children of Elton are when attending the public schools. Indian women wear dresses similar to those worn by white women. A differentiating characteristic exists, however - their length. Dresses of the Indian women are somewhat longer.

Due to the extremely low level of living the Koasati must often rely upon others to supply their clothing needs. Clothes worn are often those discarded by whites.

Hair styles of present-day Koasati women are being influenced considerably by the young girls' attendance at school. The women set their hair in curlers, hoping that their straight black hair will take on attributes characteristic of the hair of the white girls in the Elton neighborhood. While most women wear their hair short there are some who continue to part their hair in the middle, draw the hair back up over the ears, and knot it in back in a bun.

Tanning, Pottery, Wood and Metal Work

Tanning was doubtlessly engaged in during the early days of the community, but began gradually to disappear when the Indians ceased to occupy themselves at the hunt. It has already been pointed out that the ceramic art disappeared during the migration

period.¹⁰² The Koasati continued to work in wood, after their work in metals was abandoned. Trinkets, formerly fashioned from metal,¹⁰³ could be purchased in town more cheaply than they could be made. The Indians continued to make wooden spoons until they, too, fell before the cheaply purchased metal article. Koasati tribesmen, today, continue to fashion occasionally the stoka¹⁰⁴ or rackets for the ball play, and the bow and arrow, but these are skills fast passing from the scene.

Moss Work

When and where the Koasati learned to work in Spanish moss¹⁰⁵ can not be stated with assurance. That it is an art learned in Louisiana is possible. Taylor mentions it as a present (1936) activity; no mention is made of its use in the past.

They utilize the Spanish moss which grows in the area to make rope and saddle blankets. A flat board with a stick through it for twirl-

¹⁰²See p. 115, this ms.

¹⁰³See p. 116, this ms.

¹⁰⁴See photographs 19, 20, and 21, p. 184 and 185, this ms.

¹⁰⁵The name Spanish moss is new. It was called Barbe Espagne - Spanish beard - by early Louisianans. It is not a moss at all, but a flowering plant, an epiphyte, belonging to the pine-apple family. Its accepted name today is *Dendropogon Usneoides*. See C. C. Aldrich, M. W. De Blieux, and F. B. Kniffen, The Spanish Moss Industry of Louisiana, Econ. Geog., vol. 19, Dec., 1943, p. 347.



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In 1937 the stoka or rackets for the ball play were still commonly made. (Photographs by Lyda Averill Taylor, 1937).



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The stoka is still made occasionally in the Koasati community today. (Photograph by the author, August, 1952).

ling is used to twist the rope.¹⁰⁶ One person twirls the stick and another feeds out the moss. Before doing this, they go over the moss carefully to take out all twigs and burrs. It is then pulled into long bunches about three feet long, one bunch added to the other as the rope is wound.

The blanket, is about five feet by three feet. The loom consists of two upright forked posts with a stick across the forks and another parallel stick placed below at the desired length. A piece of rope is laid across the bottom of the frame to form the first weft before warp threads are added in a figure eight. The crossing of the warps is pushed down to the first weft and the second weft run through. The warp threads are held in the left hand and those in the back are pulled forward and those forward pushed back to form the next shed. The natural stiffness of the rope makes any heddle unnecessary.¹⁰⁷

Today the Koasati no longer manufacture rope or saddle blankets from Spanish moss. Spanish moss is used for mattress and pillow filling.

¹⁰⁶This is the Spanish spinner, an instrument of two parts, shaft and blade, each made of pine about one foot long. The spinner may have been introduced into Louisiana after 1763 when Spain received title to the territory, or it may have arrived through contacts with the cattle raisers of Spanish Texas, where the spinner had been used to make rope from the hair of the manes and tails of horses. The Koasati may have first learned to use it during their residence in Texas. See Fred B. Kniffen, *A Spanish Spinner in Louisiana, Southern Folklore Quarterly*, vol. 13, No. 4 (Dec.), 1949, pp. 192-199.

See photographs 22 and 23, p. 187, this ms.

¹⁰⁷Taylor, *Account*, op. cit., pp. 10-11.



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The Spanish Spinner. (Photographs by Lyda
Averill Taylor, 1937).

Games

Of the games played by the Koasati in the days of the Creek Confederacy, one is now completely forgotten, another is in the process of being lost, while a third is played only on rare occasions. Games surviving the migration period were the dice game and ball play.¹⁰⁸ The latter is still spoken of by members of the tribe, but has not been actually engaged in since 1940. Still played is the dice game, using the cane contrivances of old. However, the board used at present is the side of a cardboard box crayoned in with appropriate markings. It is a foul-weather game participated in only by the men.

The contrivances used in the ball play were considerably modified after the game was barred by Leeds in 1901. The Indians, who continued to play in secret, abandoned the deerskin ball in favor of a rubber ball, while the deerskin sinews which contained the ball within the racket were replaced by pieces of string or copper wire. The game was played by friends whenever the leisure time for so doing was available.

The ball play was engaged in until 1940, when in face of the war situation, the young men could no longer devote time to it.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸See p. 67, this ms. for a discussion of the Koasati dice game. See pp. 118-119, this ms. for a discussion of the ball play.

¹⁰⁹Kinney Williams in a conversation with the author.

However, its memory is still vivid in the minds of present-day tribesmen. Bel Abbey assured the author that, "We can play a game if you want to see it."

Today Koasati children play basketball, softball, football, pitch horseshoes, jump rope, and run races. An outdoor basketball court has been erected close to the church. Softball is played at the same site. The older men and women, as a rule, do not engage in games of dexterity; the men fish or swim occasionally during the summer months in Bayou Blue.

Dancing

The Indian dances, also banned by Leeds in 1901, were engaged in in secret up until the outbreak of World War II. The Duck dance, Horse dance, Horned-owl dance, the children's Eagle dance, and the simple dance were engaged in until 1940. The Chicken, Rabbit, Bob white, Buzzard, and Buffalo dances were participated in in the early days of the community.¹¹⁰ Taylor did not observe these dances at the time of her visits. None of the Indian dances are danced in the community today.

Music

Koasati musicians in the earliest days of the community made the cypress-knee drum, the gourd rattle, and the end-blown

¹¹⁰See pp. 119-122, this ms.

cane flute.¹¹¹ All disappeared under the influence of Reverend Leeds. Koasati songs are no longer sung; these have been replaced by the singing of church hymns. Koasati girls learn to play the piano today to accompany the church songs.

Language

The Koasati tongue remains a conservative force in Koasati culture. It is the single cultural attribute with which every tribesman is thoroughly familiar. It is the first tongue learned by the Indians; it is the one used in conversation in the home, and in daily associations within the community - other than in his business affiliations. Changes have, of course, taken place in the language. Words have been forgotten. There is today no old Koasati word for tomato or succotash; there may at one time have been distinctions between the words orange and yellow and green and blue; the former today are called by a single term, latatsi; the latter, okchatkotsi.¹¹² At the same time new words have accrued to the tongue.¹¹³ Airplanes, unknown before the days of the present community, are today called pithlaweca, or

¹¹¹See footnote 172, p. 120, this ms.

¹¹²Koasati words and their meanings were made known to the author by Mrs. Envy Abbott through Bel and Nora Abbey, Marie Thompson, and Loris Langley.

¹¹³See p. 122, this ms.

flying birds. The Koasati word for train is palkit; a church is called eschuba.

It should also be noted that the English speech of the Koasati has also been influenced markedly from the outside. Kyzer lists the following influences:

1. The Koasati language
2. Southern American speech and its sub-standard form
3. General American speech and its sub-standard form
4. Miscellaneous tendencies toward certain sound changes¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴Willie Maye Kyzer, A descriptive study of the speech of the Koasati Indians of Louisiana. Louisiana State University, M.A., 1952. p. 84.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Koasati culture has been profoundly influenced by culture contact and by a condition peculiar to Koasati history.¹ The contacts responsible for changes made in the Koasati lifeway are the following:

1. with the men of De Soto
2. with the Indian tribes of the Creek Confederacy
3. with the English and French traders
4. with both Indians and whites made between their migrations from the mother town on the Alabama River and the present Koasati community
5. with Sam Reed and Paul Leeds
6. with the French rice farmers
7. with other whites in the Elton-Kinder area

The migrations themselves, outside of the contacts made during their course constitute the condition responsible for culture changes, other than those brought about through the acculturation process.

The contact with the men of de Soto was a brief one. Koasati culture, both material and non-material, was little affected by it.

¹For an explanation of the meaning of condition see p. xi, this ms.

That is not to discount its significance, however. The Indian learned from the experience that he was not alone in the world, that white man was also part of it, that doubtless he would have to be reckoned with in the years that were to follow.

It is unfortunate that we know nothing of the Koasati lifeway during this period. It is unfortunate, too, that we have no Koasati statement on the reaction to the men of De Soto.

At the same time we know nothing of the Koasati after their first white contact until they emerge, much later, as members of the Creek Confederacy. We cannot even date their membership in that body. We have only the word of Caleb Swan, who claimed not only their membership in the league but claimed, too, that they had adopted as their own the ceremonies and customs of the Creeks.² Again we are on precarious ground. What traits did the Koasati borrow from the Muscogee? What traits did they neglect to borrow? What traits did they retain of their aboriginal culture? What traits did the Muscogee, and other Creek tribes, adopt from the Koasati culture? We may never be able to answer these questions. We have assumed, therefore, from the word of Swan, and from the fact that many Creek traits can be distinguished in the Koasati lifeway of a later date, that the Koasati culture was similar to that of the Creeks.

²Caleb Swan, in Henry R. Schoolcraft, Historical and statistical information respecting the history, condition and prospects of the Indian tribes of the United States. Parts I-VI. Phila., 1851-1857. Vol. V. p. 260.

The Koasati, then, possessed a town square complemented by a chunky yard and hot house; their houses of wood were laid out in the Creek pattern; they were controlled by a social organization dominated by the matrilineal clan system, supplemented by the phratry and moiety; they were ruled by the Koasati micco, the Great Chief, who depended on his oratorical powers and his being beloved by the members of the tribe for his position; they also knew the warrior chief when battles were to be fought; they worshipped the "Master of Life," who breathed life into the Koasati people, and worshipped as well a number of earth spirits; they participated in the Green Corn Dance and knew the Black Drink; they gained their livelihood by planting, hunting, and fishing; they wore their clothing in the Creek manner; they fashioned the bow and arrow, and the cane blow gun; they made pottery, were fine bead makers and wood workers; they fashioned the twilled plaited basket; they played a dice game and were adept players at the hoop and pole game and the ball play; they participated in the Creek dances; their taboos were those of the Creeks as were the traits connected with their life cycle; when ill they called in the shaman to exact cures by prayer and herb; at death they interred the body in the Creek manner; their ideas on after life were also patterned on the Creek ideas.

But already in 1750 the Creek pattern was being disturbed. The English and French traders had appeared in the Creek country. In exchange for deer pelts the English traders presented the Indian with his gun, his ammunition, his rum; he gave to the Koasati the

famous stroud cloth which inaugurated among them a clothing revolution; he bestowed on the tribesmen the pig; he married the Koasati girl, setting the stage for the disruption of the clan system. The French, located at Fort Toulouse between 1714 and 1763, exerted their influence on the Koasati. They taught the Indian to cultivate the melon and to plant rice, they supplied him with guns, powder, razors, and blue and red limbourg, and may have ministered to his religious needs. Catholic priests are known to have been stationed at Fort Toulouse. Whether or not the attempt was made to convert the Koasati to Christianity at this time we do not know.

When control of the North American continent was wrested from the French by the English in 1763, the Creek tribes, the Koasati among them, inaugurated their series of migrations to the west. The Koasati remained for a short time on the Tombigbee where they set up their town square. But it was not long to endure. For more than a century (1763-1884), Koasati tribal history was marked by migration and the search for an Indian home.

The tribe was never one. A number of Koasati families, accompanied by Alabama tribesmen, travelling westward, entered Louisiana for the first time in 1795. Koasati tribesmen were soon scattered over the banks of the Neches, Trinity, and Sabine rivers in Texas; they were also collecting on the Calcasieu at Indian Village, Louisiana.

What traits of the Creek culture did the Koasati take with them on their migrations? What traits were forgotten or abandoned?

What new traits were borrowed as a result of culture contact along the way? What effects did the migrations themselves have upon the Koasati lifeway? Precise answers to these questions can not always be given. The view of Koasati culture during the migration period is based largely on the memory of the tribesmen of the present community.

The homes built during the migration period bore little resemblance to the homes of the Creeks. The idea, however, of two houses, one a permanent dwelling, the other a temporary one bore some relation to the Creek idea of the summer and winter houses. The town square may or may not have been built after the departure from the Tombigbee. The only remnant existing to warrant speculation concerning the town square is the itbitka at Indian Village.³

The clan as the controlling force in Koasati social organization had lost much of its potency; it was an organization without function. Tribesmen knew that the clan existed, could recall as many as a dozen, and in many cases knew the clan of which they were members. But the laws of the clan, particularly the law of exogamy, were being violated. The chieftainship was retained although the chief's functions and his manner of selection had changed considerably. He was selected from among the leading shamans of the tribe; he was a doctor, a concocter of medicines, a prophet. It is conceivable that this change should have taken

³See p. 76, this ms.

place during the migrations. Life was unsettled; sickness was rampant; the Koasati yearned, perhaps, for a resting place. The chief, in the form of the shaman, was the one figure who could cure the ills of the tribesmen and assure them of their dreams.

The gods bore a great resemblance to the Creek gods. Minco-chitto and Aba Chacoli may be Koasati terms for the Great Chief, the Master of Breath. And the earth spirits were still worshipped.

Practices with regard to the life cycle were not conspicuously different, although the custom of shearing the child's hair at age four months was apparently unknown to the Creeks. The tribesmen continued to fish, hunt, and farm for their livelihood, although the latter had lost some of its former significance. Whether or not the Koasati occupation of a portion of the "cultural sink"⁴ is in part responsible for the decline in agriculture is open to speculation; the migrations themselves may have been the condition chiefly responsible for the decline.

The games and dances of the Creeks, with the possible exception of the chunky game,⁵ were retained, although the practices associated with them were considerably modified. Games came to be played between teams of friends rather than between rival fires.

⁴See p. 110, this ms.

⁵See p. 118, this ms.

Clothing had been conspicuously altered. Nowhere is Stroud cloth, limbourg, or brightly colored calico mentioned except with regard to the dances.

Like their Creek forebears the Koasati fashioned pottery, made beads, worked in wood, tanned skins, and made the twilled plaited basket. They continued, too, to make the bow and arrow and the cane blow gun; they ceased during the migrations to make and smoke the calumet.

Their diet was similar to that of the Creeks. The Koasati continued to eat corn, the products of the hunt, and fish. Fishing by hand net, the use of gunfire, the building of dams, the fire lure, and the use of the hook and line passed from the scene during the migration period (or may never have been practiced by the Koasati). The Koasati continued to employ fish poisoning, the bow and arrow, and the cane harpoon.

The Koasati tongue, related to the Alabama tongue, continued to draw accretions from the latter as a result of contacts in Texas; accretions from neighboring Indian tribes, notably the Bidai and Karankawa were made, and words from the English language likewise borrowed.

Koasati culture, then, had retained many traits of the Creek culture; at the same time numerous changes had occurred as a result of contacts made with alien cultures; the migrations in themselves had likewise contributed to the changes.

In 1884 white people homesteaded the lands at Indian Village

on which the Koasati lived; the Indians were forced to migrate. James Gale led them to the Koasati community. Shortly before this last migration the Indians had come under the influence of Sam Reed, a Christian preacher of Lake Charles, Louisiana. His influence upon the tribesmen may have been greater had they remained at Indian Village, but the removal of the Koasati to their present site forced preacher and Indian to part company. This event set the stage for the arrival of Reverend Paul Leeds in the Koasati community in 1893.

Vigorously Reverend Leeds pursued his task - to convert the Indians to Christianity, to crush the worship of the pagan gods, and to abolish the pagan practices associated with the dancing and ball play, and perhaps rid the community of the games and dances themselves.

As a result of Leeds' teachings the Koasati began to speak of Aba Chacoli as their only god. The earth spirits were dismissed as being believed in by the Koasati of old and were looked down upon. These were replaced by the Holy Spirit. Leeds had brought with him the Son of God - Jesus Christ - and the tribesmen gave him their own name - Imililikso. By 1936 he had become so vital a part of the Koasati religious system that he was referred to by at least one person in the present community as the only god. Prior to that date the Koasati of the present community gave Imililikso the status of a culture hero. He had once been on earth and had taught the shamans medicine.

While the tribesmen continued to participate in the ball play and continued their dancing in secret, these practices were doomed to disappear. Leeds continued to remonstrate against them. By the beginning of World War II they were no longer practiced in the community. Kinney Williams remembers the names of several dances today, but they are no longer danced. Koasati music has given way to the singing of church hymns; the Indian musical instruments have been supplanted by the piano.

Meanwhile rice and the rice farmer had invaded the Louisiana prairies and the Koasati community in the opening decades of the present century. The impact was profound and enduring. The tribesmen were to abandon hunting, fishing, and subsistence farming as their chief means of earning a livelihood. They were henceforth to be wage earners, workers on the farms of their neighbors.

They would also learn to leave the community to work. They would find jobs in sawmills, as road hands on Louisiana's highways, and as woodcutters. In recent years they have commuted as far west as Lake Charles, as far east as Basile, returning to the Koasati community in the small pick-up truck, now emblematic of a prosperous tribesman. Koasati women also work for wages. They are employed as domestic servants and as clerks in the stores of Elton.

Wages, however, for both men and women are low. It has been pointed out that a relatively prosperous tribesman, Bel Abbey, earns \$27.50 each week. Few of the Koasati earn that much. That being the case the tribesmen can enjoy few of life's luxuries. As a re-

sult the average Koasati home is today a one, two, or four-room dwelling containing only the basic pieces of furniture - a bed, a table, and a few chairs. Central heating, sewage disposal, and running sink water are unknown. The houses are unpainted. Some of the roofs leak. Electricity was unknown in the Indian homes in the community until 1948; at the present time only five homes have electricity although the prospects for the future are promising. Clothing is not plentiful; much of the children's clothing is presented to the Indian by his white friends. The Koasati diet is also meagre. It is marked by a meat and protein deficiency. Rice is the staple; it is supplemented, however, by vegetables grown in the fashion of the Creek Confederacy in the small garden to the rear of the house.

Few of the Creek traits remain today. The clan system has completely foundered, and its place in large measure taken by the family, which is today the chief organization to which the Koasati owes his allegiance. The chieftainship has been retained, and has reverted to the old Creek method of election. No longer is the chief a shaman; he is selected on the basis of his oratorical powers, and his being beloved by members of the tribe. No shaman practices in the Koasati community at present. The old Creek gods are no more. Only the names have been retained - Aba Chacoli and Minco-chitto; Imililikso is spoken of on rare occasions. Practices with regard to the life cycle have virtually been abandoned due to the influence of Mr. Leeds. The ceremony of shearing the child's

hair at four months, however, has been retained, but is not practiced universally.

Of the material culture traits few have been retained. The women still weave the twilled plaited basket although it is a trait fast disappearing. It is being replaced by the coiled basket, a trait borrowed from the Alabama Indians. The cane blowgun is still made and the racket for the ball play is occasionally fashioned, although these no longer form a vital part of the Koasati lifeway. Beads are no longer strung; wood is used only to produce an occasional bow and arrow. No longer are wooden utensils made; no longer do the Koasati work in metal; skin is no longer tanned and only rarely do the Indians employ Spanish moss to stuff mattresses or pillows. Of the Creek culture traits which have been retained by the Koasati, the language is perhaps the most resistant to change, although changes in it have been observed.

The Koasati are anticipating further changes in their culture. They are looking forward to imitating their white neighbors in their material lifeway. Many of the material things he has seen in the white man's world he now covets - the radio, the refrigerator, the washing machine, the electric iron, stove, and fan. These he will strive to obtain.

At the same time, while accumulating many more of the culture traits of the white man, the Koasati wishes to be recognized as an Indian, and to be respected as one. He wishes to be treated as an equal before the law with all men. He wishes to maintain

the Koasati community.

In face of what we have learned of the Koasati culture, and the Koasati community, is it possible to state whether or not the community will survive?

Three distinct factors favor survival: the Indians' racial characteristics, his low economic level, and his continued use of the Koasati tongue.

The Koasati realizes that he is an Indian, and as such is different from his neighbors - the white man and the Negro. While he is free to go to school today among the whites, to work in their stores, to serve in their homes, this racial consciousness of kind nevertheless remains. The Koasati is an Indian. His neighbor, the Negro, he calls "nigger," imitating the white man. It should be remembered, however, that this application is not one of disrespect. The Negro, too, is different. The mores of the surrounding area demand areal segregation. And areal segregation in and about the Koasati community works three ways: it is white; it is Negro; it is Indian.

Significant, too, is the low economic level to which the Indian is inured. The wages earned among the Koasati are only large enough for survival from week to week. The average Koasati family cannot afford the luxury of a savings account. As a result, socially speaking, the Indian cannot maintain himself in white society. His clothing, albeit clean, is often merely a

cast-off from a white student at Southwestern Louisiana Institute at Lafayette, Louisiana. Poverty, under these conditions, breeds isolation. It has also contributed in making the church an important attribute in Koasati life. St. Peter's is the chief gathering place for today's Koasati people.

The third factor tying the community together is the Koasati language, still employed as the everyday tongue. Many elderly persons speak it only. All members of the tribe speak it fluently, while the mastery of English or French is something that must yet be attained. Contacts with their neighbors cannot well be made in Koasati. The language barrier then has helped to keep the community together.

However, there are forces at work which may ultimately lead to the abandonment of the community. Those who have graduated from the Elton High School find it difficult to return. The lure toward the outside world is strong. Possessed now with a command of the white man's tongue and a new view of the world, the Koasati youngster wishes to spread his wings. Iwana John, a recent graduate of Elton High School, is now in Texas studying for a missionary career. If she succeeds in the outer world others will follow.

Higher wages outside of the immediate environment may also prove to be a disintegrating force. Already the attraction is great. Several have abandoned the community, Luke Robinson among them.

Perhaps the greatest attraction is the Alabama-Koasati Indian Reservation near Livingston, Texas, with which the Louisiana community maintains strong ties. The attractions there are three: more plentiful employment, higher wages, and better living conditions. A fourth may be added - the privilege of maintaining identity as an Indian. Sam Thompson, recently discharged from the U. S. Army, has taken his wife to the reservation. A recent chief of the tribe, Martin Abbey, has also abandoned the community for the reservation.

Survival of the community will depend upon potent Koasati leadership, upon improvements in their level of living, upon the general prosperity of the whites in the immediate vicinity. The attractions which lead to survival are strong; the forces which lead to disintegration may even be stronger.

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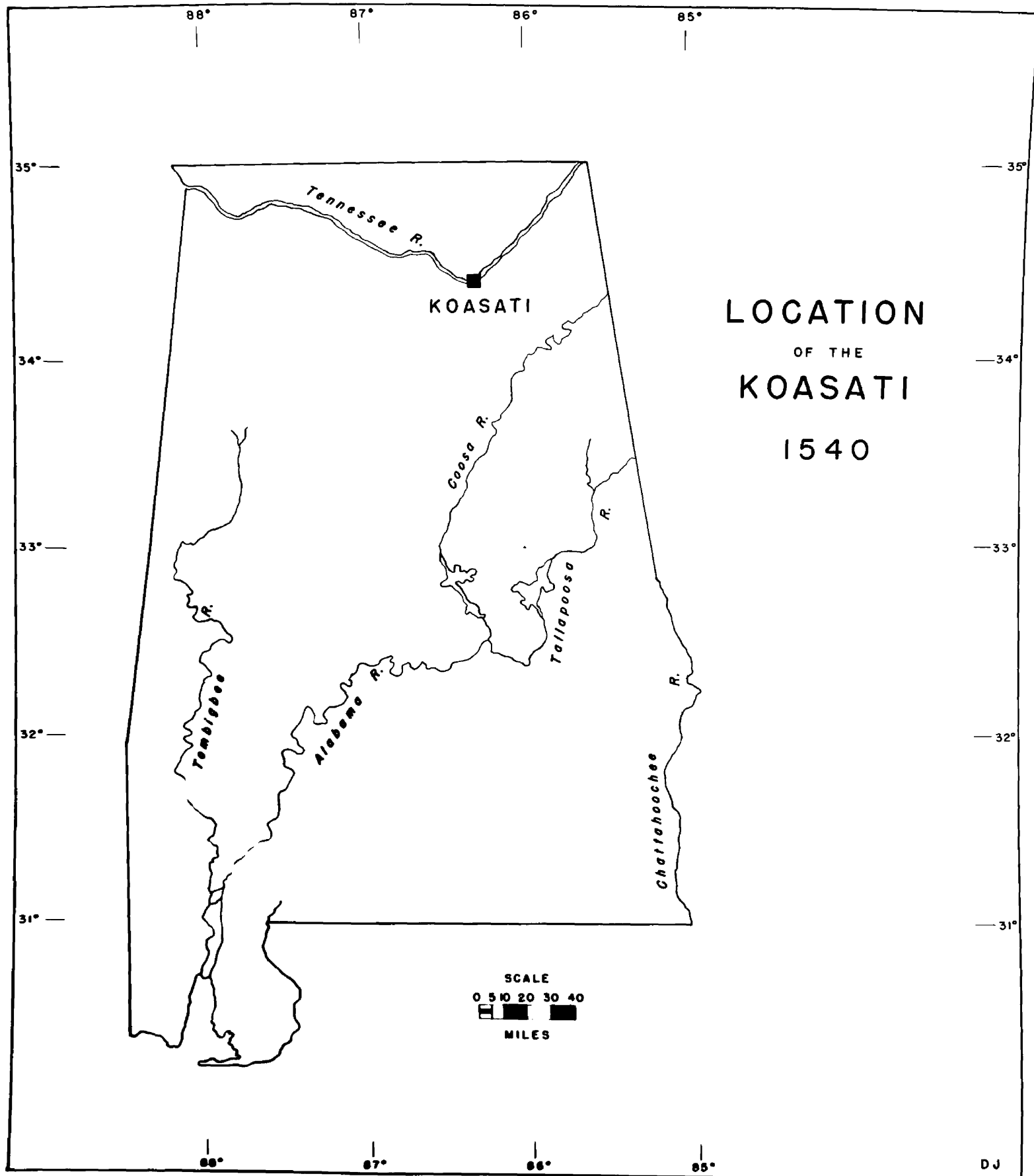
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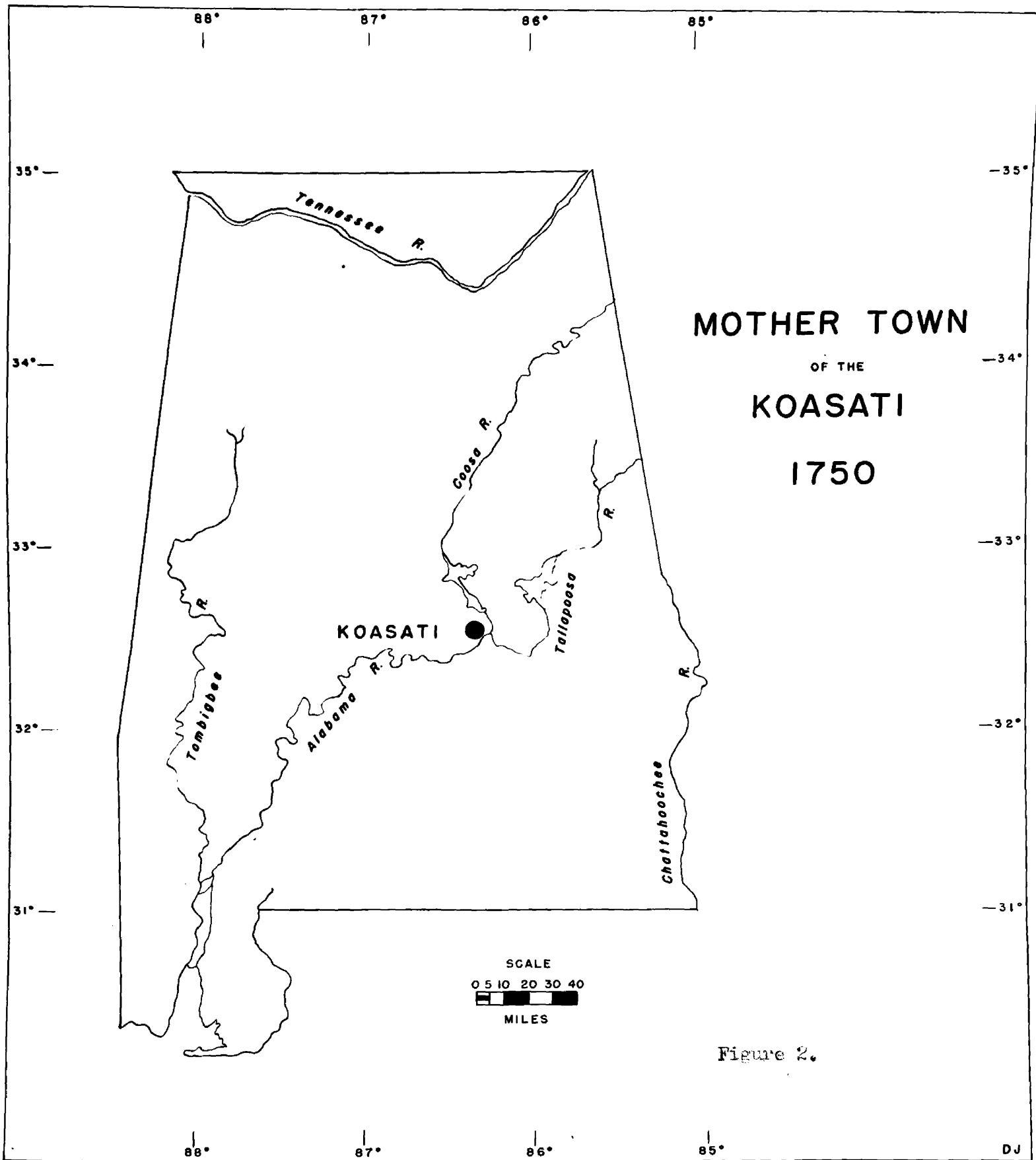
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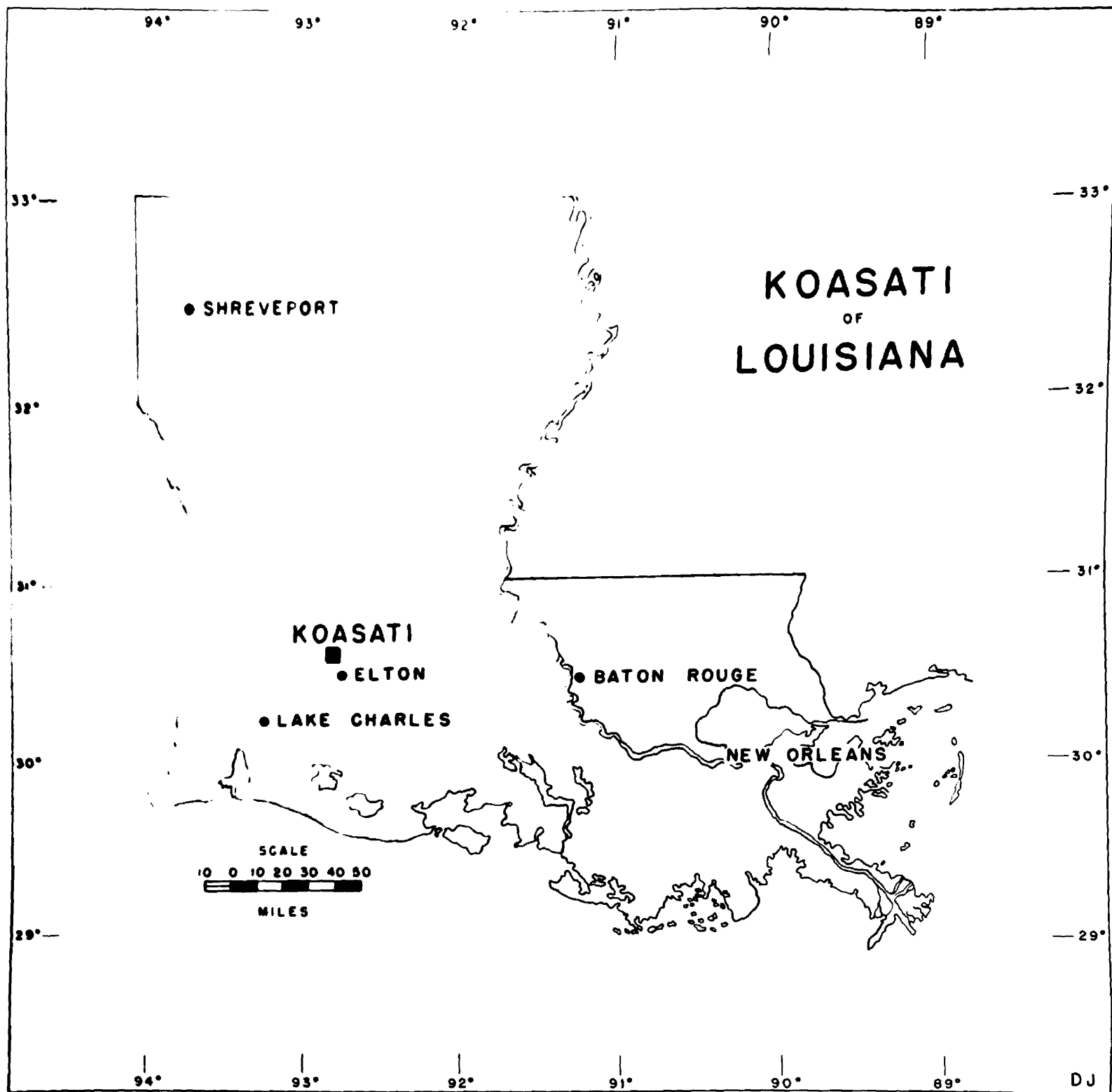
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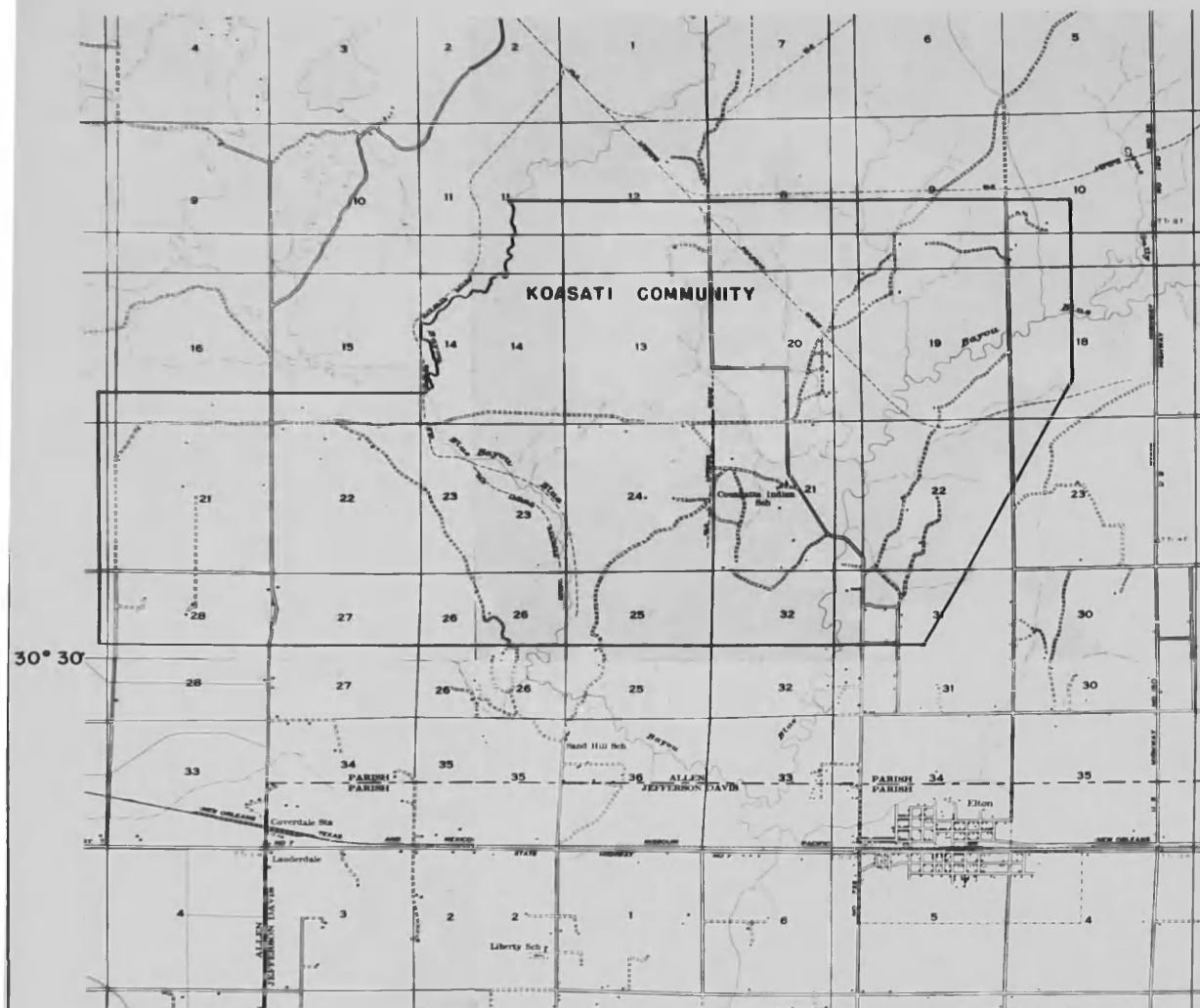


LOCATION
OF THE
KOASATI
1540





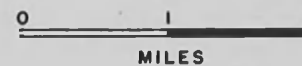
92° 45'



KOASATI COMMUNITY
OF
LOUISIANA

1935

SCALE



MILES

Figure 4.

FROM THE BAYOU BLUE, ELTON, KINDER, AND OBERLIN QUADRANGLES

92° 45'

DJ

SKETCHES OF KOSOVATI INFORMANTS

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B
SKETCHES OF KOASATI INFORMANTS

Sissy Abbey

Sissy Abbey was born in a log cabin at Indian Village.¹ At the age of seven or eight she moved to Terrebonne, and finally at twenty to the present Koasati community. Taylor estimates that she was about seventy years of age at the time of her visits (1936-1937) to the community.² Sissy Abbey was the informant upon whom Taylor relied most. Her answers to questions were always to the point; when in doubt she was careful to say that she couldn't answer. Taylor states, too, that she was well thought of by both whites and Indians alike.³ She adds:

...her house was always immaculate, her clothes were always fresh and starched so I feel her mind was clear and clean to match it.⁴

¹From the miscellaneous notes of Lyda Averill Taylor. The sketch presented here is based largely on these notes unless otherwise specified.

²Lyda Averill Taylor in a letter to the author.

³Idem.

⁴Idem.

Susie Williams

Susie Williams was the granddaughter of Koasati Williams.⁵ Her mother died when she was very young. She was raised by her father. She claimed that she was a desirable young lady; many men wished to marry her. But her father persisted in marrying her off to a widower much older than herself. She consented. Susie bore ten children. She did not remarry after her husband's death.

A severe headache, treated in the Koasati manner,⁶ caused Susie to lose much blood. As a result, she dreamed that she visited in heaven, saw her children there, noted that they were well. The dream was responsible for Susie's turning to religion. Susie was well equipped to supply Taylor with knowledge of Koasati shamanistic practices. She herself may well have been a shaman. She had learned the prayers from her mother (who had doubtlessly learned them from Koasati Williams), and learned the proper treatment for all diseases.

Taylor says that Susie was reliable and that she like Sissy Abbey was well thought of by both whites and Indians alike.

Jeff Abbey

Jeff Abbey was the chief, the beloved man of the Koasati, who was eighty-two at the time of Taylor's first visit to the community. He was well versed in the culture of the past, and

⁵See footnote 76, p. 160, this ms.

⁶See p. 101, this ms.

provided Taylor with much information concerning the economy, the social organization, the chieftainship, and the role of the in-kapitani, as well as the medical practices of the migration period in which he himself took part. He was a reliable informant.

Ency Abbott

Ency Abbott was born in the present Koasati community about fifty-six years ago. She was a Robinson prior to her marriage to Bel Abbey. When the latter died she married Lonnie Abbott, who also passed away. Ency raised seven children. It was in her home that the author slept and often ate during his stay among the Koasati. All in the community love and respect her. She is known for her sagacity and kindness. Her memory is excellent, her answers to questions sure and reliable. Because she speaks no English, interpreters are necessary. The chief ones used by the author: Bel Abbey (her son), Marie Thompson and Loris Langley (daughters), Nera Abbey (daughter-in-law), and Sam Thompson (son-in-law).

Kinney Williams

Kinney Williams, now in his middle sixties, was born in the present Koasati community. He is the father of Nora Abbey and little Elsie Williams (age 13). His wife, Binie, died several years ago. He did not remarry. Like Ency Abbott he is familiar with the recent Koasati past, is honest, and reliable. Kinney speaks English with but slight difficulty. The author needed no interpreter in discussions with him.

Bel and Nora Abbey

Bel Abbey is the son of Ency Abbott, Nora the daughter of Kinney Williams. They are husband and wife who have three daughters, Joyce, Marjorie, and Myrna. The Abbeys were born in the present community. Bel is thirty-seven, his wife thirty-three. Both speak English well; both are keenly aware of occurrences and changes which have taken place within the community in their lifetimes. Both were exceptionally eager to learn of the "old" Koasati ways - and thus performed their tasks as interpreters with zeal. Both hesitated to dispense information about which they were not certain. The home of the Abbeys was always the first stopping place in the community for the author.

Reverend Paul Leeds

Reverend Leeds, now over eighty, originally intended to preach the gospel in Central America. He was prepared to go that way when he stopped in Dallas, Texas, and learned that the Congregational Board needed a man to serve in southwestern Louisiana. Leeds volunteered for the post. He is now pastor of the First Congregational Church in Kinder, Louisiana, and continues to this day to visit the Koasati community on two Sundays in every month. Leeds' memory is excellent, although his actual knowledge of the Koasati lifeway cannot be said to be considerable. He is aware of the numerous changes that have taken place within the community, however. His answers to questions submitted by the author were only given after considerable thought.

APPENDIX C
MEMBERS OF THE KOASATI

APPENDIX C
MEMBERS OF THE KOASATI¹

Bel Abbey	Kent Sylestine	Adele Williams
Nora Abbey	Rasabel Sylestine	Rodney Williams
Joyce Abbey	Curry K. Sylestine	Norman Williams
Marjorie Abbey	Rena Robinson	Houston Williams
Myrna Abbey	Bernadine Robinson	Susie Williams
Ency Abbott	Abel John	Fern Williams
George Abbott	Elsie John	Albert John
Emmy Abbott	Katherine John	Margaret John
Sam Thompson	Ed John	Edward Sylestine
Marie Thompson	Martha John	Della Sylestine
Luke Robinson	Bertha John	Le Roy Sylestine
Fred Langley	Iwana John	Deeson Sylestine
Loris Langley	Lowell A. John	Carl J. Sylestine
Edmund John	Alvin Wilson	Geraldine Sylestine
Woodrow John	Ira B. John	Emily Abbey
Clara J. John	Douglas John	Tom John
Lizzie Robinson	Nora John	Wanda Williams
Mildred Robinson	Ed Wilson	Charles Sylestine
Gus Celestine, Jr.	Louisa Wilson	Kent K. Sylestine, Jr.

¹From the Union Roll Book, Koasati Church, 1952.

Madeline Celestine	Bula Wilson	Dempsey Poncho
Harry Robinson	Gilbert Abbey	Jane Poncho
Miriam Robinson	Ada Abbey	Ray Poncho
Ena May Robinson	Albert Williams	Pauline Poncho
Neva L. Poncho	Kinney Williams	Leatrice Langley
Horace Williams	Elsie Williams	Joe Austin
Richard Robinson	Jameson Poncho	Zelma Austin
Florence Robinson	Joe Williams	Melvin Austin
Herbert John	Mabel Batisse	Dorothy Austin
Lycia Wilson	Mary Kay Batisse	Ben John
Wilfred Wilson	Donald Batisse	Effie John
Asa Poncho	Boston Obe	Rohner John
Nicy Poncho	Minnie Obe	Gardner Langley, Jr.
Herman Poncho	William McKay Obe	Scott John
Alice Poncho	Lee Jenkin Obe	Madie John
Foster Poncho	Irene Obe	Nelson John
Fannie Poncho	Solomon Batisse	Clyde John
Calvin C. Poncho	Adeline Batisse	Harrison John
Carter Poncho	Janice Batisse	Winston John
Jermone R. Poncho	Ardeaner Batisse	Mary Langley
Edwin Poncho	Joe A. Langley	Evenner Langley
Ida M. Poncho	Lorena Langley	Virginia Langley
Travis Poncho	Arzella Langley	Louis Langley
Maggie Langley	Davis Sickey	Dempsey Langley
Quincy Langley	Daisy Sickey	Allen Langley

Zeline Langley	Ernest Sickey	Harriston Langley
Coyde Langley	Johnson Sickey	Betty J. Langley
Nessie Williams	Dec Langley	Elem Langley
Newton Williams	Delia Langley	Sally Langley
Ethel Williams	J. D. Langley	Lillian Langley
Walter Williams	Salley H. Langley	Burnett Langley
Ilorenc Langley	Eula M. John	Sam H. Wilson
Alvin Langley	Austin John	Martin Abbey
Judy A. Langley	Alex John	Leona Abbey
Adam John	Wilda John	Ina E. Abbey
Alton John	Jessie John	Wilbur Abbey
Bessie John	Owen R. John	

VITA

Daniel Jacobson was born in Newark, New Jersey on November 6, 1923. He received his elementary school training in the schools of East Orange and Newark, New Jersey. He attended the South side High School in Newark and was graduated from there in January, 1942. Anxious at the time to become a history teacher at the secondary school level he enrolled at the New Jersey State Teachers College in Upper Montclair New Jersey. In his sophomore year he enlisted in the Enlisted Reserve Corps of the United States Army Air Force and was called to active duty on March 5, 1943. He served until February 19, 1946, when he was honorably discharged. One week after receiving his discharge he was back at the New Jersey State Teachers College from which he was graduated in June, 1947. Dr. Harley P. Milstead, Professor of Geography at Montclair suggested that he continue to pursue his interests in geography. As a result he spent the summer session and the academic year 1947-1948 at Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts. After teaching at the secondary school level (1948-1949) he enrolled at Teachers College, Columbia University and received his M. A. degree there in June, 1950. Pursuing further his interests in geography he enrolled at the Louisiana State University in order to study with Dr. Fred B. Kniffen. At present he is an instructor in geography at the University of Kentucky. He is a member of the American Anthropological Association, the Association of American Geographers, the American Geographical Society, and the National Council of Geography Teachers.

EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

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Major Field: **Geography**

Title of Thesis: **Koasati Culture Change**

Approved:

William S. Haag
Major Professor and Chairman

Richard J. Russell
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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Date of Examination:

7 May 1954